

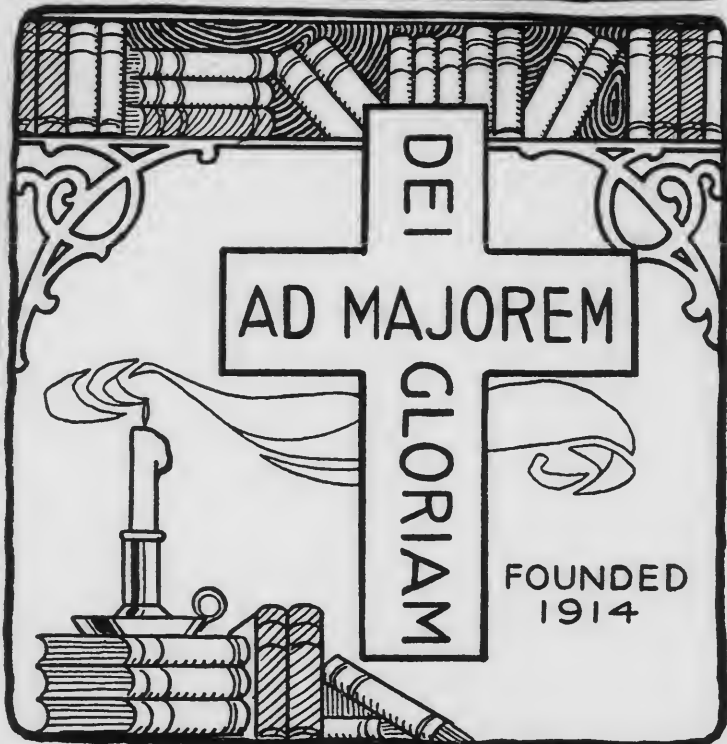
History of Methodism

In the . .
Stourport Circuit



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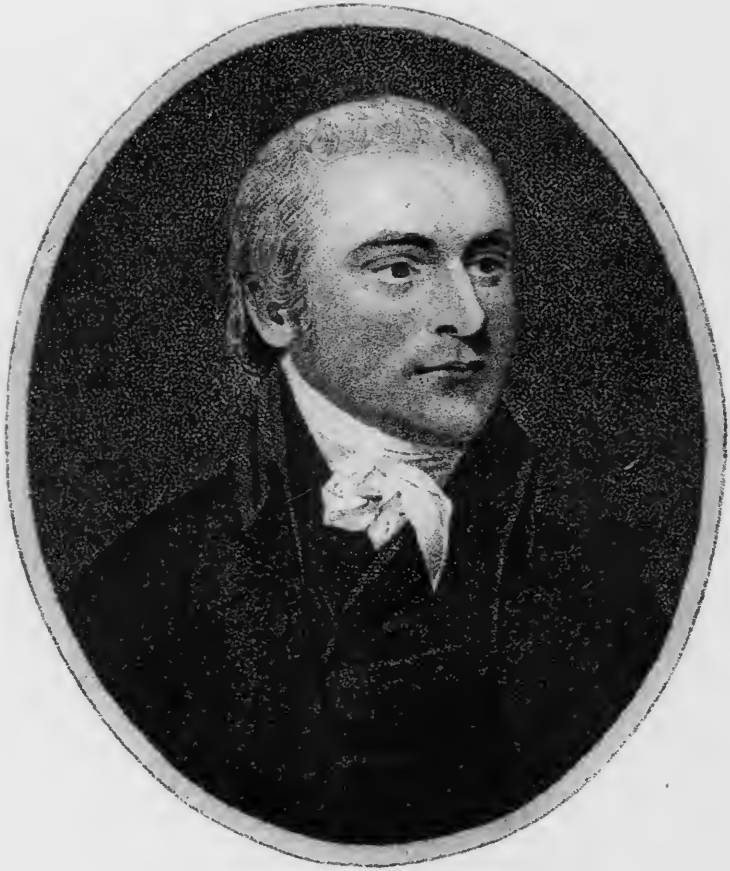
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REV. RICHARD ELLIOT.
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A HISTORY
OF
METHODISM
IN THE STOURPORT
CIRCUIT

FROM A.D. 1781 TO A.D. 1899

BY
JOHN F. WEDLEY.

STOURPORT:
THE STOURPORT PRINTING COMPANY, HIGH STREET.

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MDCCCXCIX.

PREFACE.

For some years past there has been impressed upon my mind the desirability of having some record of Methodism in this Circuit. The historical associations of a Circuit at one time one of the foremost in the Connexion of "the people called Methodists," should not be lost sight of, and that is why an attempt is now made to keep on record that which may prove interesting and profitable to those who will come after.

It is to be regretted that many old minute books and records have been lost, otherwise this little History would have been made more interesting. No Local Preacher's minute book can be found save the one now in use, which dates back but about eight years, and the oldest Sunday School Minute Book is of a comparatively recent date.

Many thanks are due to the undermentioned friends who have so kindly and willingly lent old plans, account books, magazines, letters, and other materials, without which this book could not have been written.*

J. F. WEDLEY.

*Stourport,
October, 1899.*

**Mr. ENOCH BALDWIN, J.P., Mr. JOHN BALDWIN, Mrs. ROBINSON, Mrs. J. H. JACKSON, Mr. T. JACKSON, Mr. OLIVER GILES, Mrs. JOHN NOTT, Mr. T. OWENS J.P., Mr. G. PHILLIPS, Mrs. A. SEYS, Miss LANE, Mr. H. W. RICE, Mr. J. J. COOPER, Mr. F. W. YATES, Mr. J. W. HAYWOOD, Mrs. JOINER, Mr. I. L. WEDLEY, Miss HORTON, Mr. J. W. POWELL, Rev. H. PARKES, Mr. G. STAMPE, Mr. F. BINT, Mr. R. LLOYD, Mr. FELTON, Mr. A. PARKER (Guildford), Mr. W. ROGERS, Mr. E. PARRY, Shuttle Office.*

TO

ENOCH BALDWIN Esq., J.P., C.C.,

WHOSE FAMILY FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED

YEARS HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH

STOURPORT METHODISM,

This Book is respectfully dedicated.



HISTORY OF METHODISM

IN THE

STOURPORT CIRCUIT.

STOURPORT.

METHODISM was introduced into Stourport in 1781 by Mr. John Cowell, coal merchant. He had probably heard Mr. Wesley preach in some other place and, desiring to do what good he could, started what was soon to become a strong Society. The need for a preaching house was, of course, soon felt, but the Society being too poor to erect one themselves, joined the Calvinistic Methodists, who were likewise too poor to build alone. In 1782, a piece of land, a portion of what was called "Wall Field," was purchased by Mr. Cowell, and others, from Mr. John Acton, of Lower Areley, now called Areley Kings, and in the following year a chapel was erected for the joint use of both denominations.

Some have supposed that this first Chapel, or Protestant Meeting House as it was then called, was built at the top of New Street; this is a mistake, as the land upon which the present Chapel stands was a portion of the same field, and, from what the writer has been able to gather, the buildings must have been very near to each other.

For a time, in all probability, everything went on well, but it can be no wonder that two bodies, one preaching the doctrine of Election, and the other Universal Salvation, should disagree; and the Calvinists, who were the stronger of the two, totally excluded the Arminians and left them without a place in which to worship. But this was not to be for long. On Friday, March 25th, 1787, John Wesley paid his first visit to Stourport. He says, "Notice having been given, though without my knowledge, I went over to Stourport, a small new built village almost equally distant from Bewdley, and from Kidderminster. I had seen Mr. Heath before—a middle-aged clergyman, who is going over to Cokesbury college, and is, I believe, thoroughly qualified to preside there. I met his wife and two daughters here, who are quite willing to bear him company; and I think their tempers and manners, 'so winning soft, so amiably mild,' will do him honour wherever they come. At noon, abundance of people being gathered together from all parts, I preached on Isaiah liii, 6-7. We have not had such an opportunity since we left Bristol. The stout-hearted trembled, and every one seemed almost persuaded to be a Christian."

Land having been procured, and permission having been granted by the Conference of 1787 for the erection of another Preaching House, Mr. Cowell and other friends proceeded to erect the present building, and Mr. Wesley preached in it on Thursday, March 21st, 1788. He says: "Thursday, March 21st, I went to Stourport. Twenty years ago there was but one house here, now there are two or three streets; and, as the trade swiftly increases, it will probably grow into a considerable town. A few years since Mr. Cowell largely contributed to the

building of a preaching house here, in which both Calvinists and Arminians might preach; but when it was finished the Arminian preachers were totally excluded. Rather than go to law Mr. Cowell built another house, both larger and more convenient. I preached there at noon to a large congregation, but to a much larger in the evening. Several clergymen were present, and were as attentive as any of the people. Probably there will be a deep work of God in this place." Tradition says Mr. Wesley lodged that night with some friends at Astley Burff. At any rate he stayed in the district, and proceeded next morning to Kidderminster, where he breakfasted at Mr. Pochim Lister's.

The newly-built chapel was not registered as a preaching place until October of the same year, as the following copy of the register shews:—

To the Right Revd. Father in God, Richard,
Lord Bishop of Worcester, his Registrar or
Registrars, &c.

In pursuance of an Act of Parliament issued forth in the reign of King William and Queen Mary, entitled an Act for the exempting of their Majesty's subjects in these realms from certain penalties, &c.,

We, whose names are underwritten hereby petition that the new meeting house lately erected at Stourport, in the Hamlet of Lower Mitton, and Parish of Kidderminster, and County of Worcester and diocese of the same, may be licensed as a proper place for the worship of Almighty God, for Protestant Dissenters.

AARON YORK,
JOHN COWELL,
THOS. ROWLEY,

SAM HAZENETT,
GEORGE BURTON,
JOHN HARPER.

Stourport, Sept. 11th, 1788.

Let it be Registered.—R. WORCESTER.
8th Oct., 1788.

The within was entered in the Registry of the
Diocese of Worcester.

RICHARD CLARKE,
Deputy Registrar.

This new meeting house measured 46ft. x 27ft. inside measurement; and forms what is now the central portion of the Chapel. It was in this part Mr. Wesley preached when he paid his second and third visits to Stourport. The entrance door was situated at the end near the present chapel-keeper's house, while the pulpit would, probably, stand at the other end. There appears to have been no other buildings in the shape of vestries or class rooms erected at that time; all meetings, of whatever description, in connection with the cause, being doubtlessly held in the Chapel. What the order of service was, or at what time the service commenced, there is nothing on record to shew. What became of the Calvinistic brethren and the house which they had built, with the help of the Arminians, history does not tell us.

In March, 1790, Mr. Wesley paid his last visit to Stourport. Describing that visit, he says: "Thursday, 18th, we went to Stourport, which is now full twice as large as it was two years ago. The first Chapel was built about three years ago by the joint contributions of Arminians and Calvinists, agreeing that they should preach by turns. But in a short time the poor Arminians were locked out. On this, one or two gentlemen built another far larger and more commodious. But it was not large enough to contain them in the evening, to whom I explained that solemn passage in the Revelation, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.'

They seemed to be all serious and attentive as long as I was speaking ; but the moment I ceased, four-score or a hundred began talking all at once. I do not remember ever to have been at such a scene before. This must be amended, otherwise (if I should live) I will see Stourport no more. The following letter, the last ever written by Mr. Wesley and found in his bureau a few days after his death, shews that he had forgiven the bad behaviour of the people, and that he had repented of his determination not to visit them again. It was addressed to Mr. York, of Stourport, near Kidderminster, Worcestershire.

LONDON, *Feb.*, 1791.

DEAR SIR,

On Wednesday, March 17th, I propose, if God permit, to come from Gloucester to Worcester, and on Thursday, the 18th, to Stourport. If our friends at Worcester are displeased, we cannot help it. Wishing you and yours all happiness,

I am, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

He died on March 2nd, just sixteen days before the promised visit. Mr. Aaron York built York House, and after him York Street was named. He carried on the business of a coal and timber merchant, was a Chapel Trustee, and one of the chief residents of the town. After his death, his wife, Mary York, was one of the chief supporters of the Methodist cause in Stourport. In 1794, application was made to Conference for permission to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was granted. Thus our people had the privilege of partaking of this blessed Sacrament in

their own sanctuary six years before the Methodists of the circuit town, who did not apply for permission till 1800.

In February, 1797, the cause lost by death one of its chief supporters, Mrs. Wright. Her funeral sermon was preached on Sunday, the 26th, by the Rev. Jonathan Crowther, the junior circuit minister, stationed at Worcester. His text was taken from 1 Peter, i., 24, 25, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." She was described as a "sincere, sterling, uniform, experimental, and practical Christian."

The Worcester circuit was at this time a very extensive one, embracing nearly the whole of the county, and also some part of Shropshire, and as there were only three circuit ministers, it is very probable that many of those living in the remoter parts, scarcely ever saw the Methodist preacher, depending solely upon the local brethren for their spiritual edification. The desirability for a division of the circuit was plainly seen, and a decision soon arrived at. Thus in 1797 Stourport, with a membership of 76, was chosen to be the head of the new circuit; and the other places were: Kidderminster, 94; Bewdley, 78; Astley Common, 18; Forest, 22; Bind, 12; Clee Hill, 16; Factory, 16; The Chapel, 20; Ludlow, 19; Cleobury, 12; Beveny Wood, 10; Blackford, 23; Coxted Ford, 12; Clee Town, 7; Brookerton, 18; Ditton, 11; Payton's Aston, 19; Bridgnorth, 11; Woolston, 15; Clows Top, 11. The Circuit was twenty-four miles across, and was the fifth of the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District; the others being Worcester, Birmingham, Dudley, and Shrewsbury.

Thus commenced the Stourport Circuit; and we can imagine the rejoicing among the Methodists of the town at the thought of having their own minister to reside among them. The first two ministers appointed were Richard Elliot and Samuel Taylor, both of them to reside at Stourport.

It cannot be ascertained with absolute certainty where the house was situated in which they came to dwell; but it has been handed down that it was where the chapel-keeper now lives. The position of the house and chapel seem to bear this out; but on the other hand, most of the well-to-do people of the town were Methodists at that time, and it can be hardly understood that they would be satisfied with that house as a residence for their ministers. Both preachers were young men; Mr. Elliot, who came from the Birmingham Circuit, being twenty-seven, and Mr. Taylor, transferred from Swansea, being but twenty-five. The two ministers stayed in the circuit one year, their places being taken in 1798 by Joseph Taylor and John Knowles. Mr. Taylor was a man well-known throughout the connexion; he was a member of the first legal Conference elected by Mr. Wesley under his Deed of Declaration. He afterwards became a District Chairman, and was chosen President of the Conference of 1834. In 1799, the membership of the circuit had increased by sixty for the two years.

In this same year died the second Mrs. Wright, of Stourport, a daughter of Captain Webb, of Bristol, Mr. Wesley's friend and helper. An account of her life appears in the Methodist Magazine for June, 1799. She was a friend of Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, and was loved and revered for her "genuine, solid, unaffected piety."

In 1800, Francis Wrigley and James Buckley were the resident ministers; both of them men of standing in Methodism. Mr. Buckley, on one of his visits to Kidderminster, called to see Baxter's Pulpit, and upon that occasion wrote the following lines:—

“From thee, the vehicle of Truth, Jehovah's Word,
 Hath oft displayed the glories of the Lord;
 Immortal Baxter was the Herald's name,
 Whose pious zeal with a seraphic flame
 Proclaimed the vengeance of great Sinai's God,
 While sinners trembled at the potent nod;
 Lest Sinai's God, with His vindictive ire,
 Should doom their souls to that eternal fire
 Where his ten thousand thousand engines meet
 To make each sinner's punishment complete,
 The radiant beams from Baxter's orbit shin'd
 Of mercy and of grace to all mankind.
 For contrite hearts he found a sovereign balm,
 The troubled souls at Jesu's word were calm;
 And, with a shepherd's care the Church he fed,
 With hidden manna, and the living bread,
 On the fair mount, where faith and love survey
 The Promised Land and dawn of that great day,
 Which crowns the day of grace with an immortal song,
 Where God's adored by the first seraph's tongue.
 Though Truth was great, its accents so sublime,
 Great Baxter's preaching was pronounced a crime.
 At Jeffreys' indignant bar arraigned,
 Accused of crimes his pious soul disdained—
 Reproach and penal edicts, though severe,
 Imprisonment or death he did not fear.
 For either world, for every state prepared,
 He suffered with his Lord, and with him shared
 Omnipotent support! And gifts divine,
 His presence made the darkest region shine!
 Immovable he stood on Truth's firm rock,
 In courts, in prison, and the fiery shock
 Of persecution, in its various forms;
 Still, with triumphant joy, he braved the storms
 Of human life. And, entered into rest,
 Enthroned with Christ, he reigns for ever blest.
 There reaps a harvest of immortal souls,
 Who shine resplendent through the distant poles;
 His foes all vanquished, and the trophy won,
 He shines effulgent as the radiant sun!”

Mr. Buckley was for some years a missionary, and afterwards one of the Mission Secretaries.

The famous Samuel Bradburn was acquainted with the Cowells, and about this time paid several visits to Stourport. A letter of his, addressed to Miss Cowell, will not be out of place.

MANCHESTER, *July 16, 1801.*

MY DEAR AMELIA,

I know the regard you have for every one of my family, and how glad you are to hear of whatever does them all good. Our afflictions have been many since the last Conference, and few of them equal to what we all felt for poor George.

His complaint was a consumption (like what his mother died of), which made him endure very great pain for several weeks; and at half-past five o'clock this morning he died, while Sophia, Maria, Sally, and I were round the bed. He had a fierce conflict with the Enemy for about twenty minutes but on my praying with him and speaking a few comfortable words, his peace returned.

His last words were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit now happy." He died without sigh or groan. Blessed be the Lord for taking him, for, indeed, his life was a real burden to himself and all of us. He was never fearful of death, nor was ever heard to utter a murmuring or discontented word, and did not keep his bed one day. He had every help that could be procured, and seemed often on the mending hand.

I am now deprived of all my six sons, the last in his nineteenth year—from whose learning and abilities as a fine genius I had great expectations. The true source of consolation to the King of Israel that he should go where his child was, is enough—the kingdom of little children. Of being there in due time, I have no doubt.

My amiable Sophia and the three little girls are well, only Sophia's pain in her back now and then returns. Her love to you and all your good family, to whom present mine. As to myself, I am well and hearty, without ache or pain. Maria is greatly affected by her brother's death. They loved each other very much, and she looked for his recovery almost to the last.

Pray can I do anything for your good folk at the Conference, about your preachers? Let me know whether or not. As George is to be buried on Sunday, I propose going off on Monday. Direct for me at Messrs. Sadler, linen-drapers, Leeds, Yorkshire. My good dissenting friend, with whom I used to lodge, and her daughter, is from home. Write on Sunday, and I shall get it on Tuesday. Wishing you all good, I am, my dear Amelia,

Yours, in endless love, S. BRADBURN.

Passing on to 1804, we find Jonathan Edmondson and Thomas Laycock the resident ministers. Mr. Edmondson rose to the Presidential Chair in 1818.

In 1805, the preachers' new house was built; this house being the present Lecture Room.

The following year, Charles Gloyne came to the circuit. A glance at an old plan drawn up by Mr. Gloyne may here prove interesting.

There are twenty-five preachers, including the two ministers, and each appointment to be supplied by a brother residing in the circuit; no supply from other circuits; no students to take occasional appointments; the whole work being accomplished without any outside help whatever. The Plan extends over six months, and out of its twenty-six Sundays, some

of the local brethren are planned twenty-three. Brave men they were in those days! Working many hours during the week, many of them would have to start on the Saturday night to be in time for the Sunday services. Denying themselves of the one rest-day, and home comforts, they went forth in all kinds of weather to do their best for the Master. Trains were then not dreamed of, and there is no record of any horse-hire fund till very many years after. Do not let us undervalue the labours of these servants of other days. Like those of old, many of them were 'unlearned and ignorant men,' but their hearts were all aglow with love to God and their fellow-men, and it was this love which prompted them to carry the message of Salvation. It is stated on this Plan 'that every brother must take his own appointments, if possible, or provide a suitable substitute out of those who stand upon the Plan. Should any neglect attending to this rule twice during the time of this Plan, he shall be put back upon trial in the next; and should he then continue his neglect, he shall be excluded.'

"The next meeting is appointed to be held at the Bind, Mr. William Sheels', on Monday, March 15th, 1808, to begin precisely at eleven o'clock in the forenoon. All the local preachers are desired to be present, or send a sufficient reason why they can not attend; if this is not done they will be subject to such censure as the meeting shall think proper to impose upon them. After the meeting, a Watch-Night will be held; preaching to begin at seven o'clock."

In 1808, Jacob Stanley came to the circuit; his colleague being James Hyde, a young preacher in the second year of his ministry. Mr. Stanley spent two terms of service among the Stourport

Methodists, coming again in 1820-1-2. He was a Northumberland man, having been born at Alnwick, *Brother* January 14th, 1776, and was the son of the Rev. Thomas Stanley, also a Methodist minister. When only eleven years of age he united himself to the Methodist Society. He afterwards removed to London, where his zeal attracted the attention of one of the ministers stationed there, by whom he was introduced into the ministry. For fifty years he preached the word with great acceptance, and finally settled at Stourport, where some of his family were living. He travelled in the best circuits, and his preaching was always acceptable. He was a man respected and honoured above many, and, in 1845, was elected President of the Conference, where he proved himself equal to the demands and responsibilities of the position. His last sermon was preached from Matt. 22, xii., "'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' And he was speechless." "I know not," said he at the commencement of his last illness, "what may be the issue, but, life or death, all is well." He spoke of himself as a sinner saved by grace. In replying to the anxious inquiries of his relatives, his frequent answer was, "As regards the body, feebleness extreme; as regards the soul great peace through faith in Christ." When near death, his children watching around his bed, the stillness was broken by his exclamation, "Thou, Lord, refreshest my soul!" They bowed their knees in reverence and in silence, while his spirit was gently breathed forth into the hands of his Creator and Redeemer.

The character of Mr. Stanley can scarcely be over-estimated. He was a valiant soldier of the Cross. Writing at the close of his second term of ministerial service, in 1822, he says, "Preaching



REV. HENRY PARKES.

(A.D., 1899)



was introduced in the afternoon at Bewdley, Kidderminster, and, occasionally, at Stourport. This year preaching commenced at Shrawley, where a Society has recently been formed, and where the prospect of success is promising. Broomhill has also lately been taken back again from Bromsgrove to this circuit. During this year we have done a little in the way of distributing tracts, but for want of a fund have not been able to persevere. Some good, however, has already been accomplished by the little which has been done. In general, we have had much peace and some prosperity. Upon the whole we have reason to thank the Lord for what has been done among us. Including twenty-four from Broomhill there has been a net increase of 102 members during the last three years, in which time several have obtained peace, whilst others have departed in the faith. May my successor and his colleagues be abundantly more successful.

On September 10th, 1809, Miss Ward, of Stourport, died. She is described as a very beautiful character, and departed this life fully trusting in Christ.

By this time the Circuit had greatly extended in area. Other preaching places had been added to it, and it had become large and unwieldy. For some few years Ludlow had been a Mission Station worked under the superintendency of the Rev. John Rigg. In 1810 a division took place, Ludlow being the head of the new circuit, and taking over Clee Hill, Factory, The Chapel, Blackford, Clee Town, Brookerton, Ditton, Payton's Aston, and Woolston, with a total membership of two hundred and twenty. This left Stourport with fifteen preaching places, two ministers, and seventeen local preachers, and a

membership of four hundred and thirty two. The preaching places were: Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Bridgnorth, Bind, Beveny Wood, Forest, Cleobury, Frith Common, Belbroughton, Shelsley, Upper Arley, Areley, Mamble, and Clowstop.

The ministers now stationed at Stourport were Thomas Hutton and Webster Morgan. The latter was succeeded in the following year by Theophilus Lessey, a man destined to become a famous preacher and orator. He was born April 7th, 1787, and was presented to God in baptism by John Wesley. In 1808 he entered the ministry, Stourport being his third circuit. Writing on August 26th, 1811, he says, "I arrived at Stourport last Friday, and found Mrs. Hutton and family quite well. They received me with great kindness and affection. I preached here yesterday for the first time, to a genteel congregation, but, I fear, not a very religious or lively one. There seems to be too much conformity to the world among them. My earnest prayer to God is that he would increase vital Godliness in the midst of them. He alone can do it. I hope I shall be comfortable among them. They appear very friendly and affectionate. I feel determined to devote myself to God." He afterwards wrote to his father of the pleasure he felt in his new Circuit. He began his second year of work with expectations of domestic bliss; he closed it with sorrow and tears. After twelve months' residence at Stourport, he removed to Kidderminster, the Circuit Steward having provided a house for the second minister. The continued illness of Mrs. Lessey rendered it necessary that she should return to her native air. Mr. and Mrs. Lessey were away from the Circuit for some months, an exchange of labour being made with the Rev. Isaac Clayton.

Mr. Lessey was one of the preachers who formed the Irish Centenary Deputation, and the places in which he spoke were filled to overflowing. The following are the words of one who heard him, "Mr. Lessey rose in one of his most impassioned moods and gave utterance to bursts of eloquence which astonished and delighted all who heard him." A deputation afterwards waited upon him with a request that he would furnish them with a copy of his speech for publication, but he replied that the speech was altogether extemporaneous. He wished on one occasion to avoid speaking at a meeting at Exeter Hall, but was compelled to yield to the solicitations of the Secretaries, and the calls of the assembly.

There were at this time six Society Classes at Stourport, conducted by Mr. William Hill, who was leader of two, Mr. Richard Yapp, Mr. Thomas Wright, Mr. T. Raine, and Mr. T. Rowley. Mr. Hill's Sunday Class consisted of 23 members, his Friday Class of 19; Mr. Yapp's, 11; Mr. Wright's, 16; Mr. Raine's, 14; Mr. Rowley's, 16; a total of 99 for the Stourport Society. The Circuit members numbered 478.

In this year, 1812, considerable alterations and additions were made to the Chapel, two new galleries being put in, a chancel added, and other improvements, at a cost of £552 19s. 0d. The re-opening services were conducted by the Rev. Joseph Taylor, of Birmingham, the second Superintendent Minister appointed to the Circuit. His expenses were £1.

At a Quarterly Meeting held at Stourport, Oct. 2nd, 1812, it was resolved that the occasional expenses of the Preachers, including furniture and repairs of the houses, both at Stourport and at Kidderminster, should be regularly paid by each

Society distinctively, and that each Society should defray the board of the preacher residing with them; and that in future Stourport should pay to the Quarterly Meeting 2s. 6d. for each of the members of its Society, and Kidderminster 1s. 3d.,—the numbers to be calculated every quarter.

In this year Rev. John Lancaster took the place of Mr. Hutton as Superintendent Minister, and in the following year three preachers were appointed to the Circuit: Mr. Lancaster, William France (who followed Mr. Lessey) and Samuel Sugden. The members in the Stourport Society for this year (1814) numbered 112, and the local preachers five. The different collections were as follows:—Kingswood School £8 3s. 3d., Conference £7 0s. 0d., Missionary £8 5s., July £10 10s. 0d., Preachers' Fund £3 17s.

At the June Quarterly Meeting of the same year, held at Stourport, it was resolved "That at every Quarterly Meeting in future a dinner shall be provided for the members of the said meeting, who shall each pay 1s. 6d., the residue to be paid by the town Steward. The local preachers are, however, exempt from paying.

In 1816 the Rev. Thomas Dowty, of Coventry, accepted an invitation to the Circuit. The District Meeting was asked to procure for the Circuit, in future, one married and two single ministers, as the support of two families was telling rather heavily upon its financial resources. A third man, however, was not appointed, and the Circuit has not had three ministers since that time except in 1846.

In 1818, Richard Smetham, who had been second minister in the preceding year, was appointed superintendent; he was an uncle of Smetham the

artist. Following him, Mr. Stanley entered upon his second term of service, at the close of which the Quarterly Meeting passed a most cordial vote of thanks for "The ability, zeal, and disinterestedness with which he had managed the affairs of the Circuit during the last three years." Unanimous thanks were also given to his colleague, the Rev. James Allen, for "The zeal and punctuality with which he had fulfilled the duties assigned him."

The principal supporters of the Methodist cause at this time were the Wrights, Russels, Lewtys, Baldwins, Rowleys, Hills and Yates families. Mr. Wright, who lived in Bridge Street, was the father of John Skirrow Wright, M.P., whose statue stands in the Council House Square, Birmingham. Mr. Hill, who lived in High Street, in the house now occupied by Mr. Viccars, was father of the late Thomas Rowley Hill, M.P. for Worcester. The Russels lived in High Street, in the house occupied by Mr. Ward. Mr. James Rowley, who was a timber merchant, and had married a daughter of Dr. Adam Clarke, lived in Bridge Street, in the house now occupied by Pheysey & Co.

In 1821 Dr. Clarke visited Stourport, staying with his daughter, Mrs. Rowley. He preached in the chapel on December 25th, and conducted a sacramental service afterwards.

In 1824 the Chapel was first lit by gas,—possibly one of the first in Methodism to be so lighted,—the gas being supplied from the Foundry. The cost of the fittings and glasses amounted to £56 15s. 1d.

The year 1825 saw James Heaton and William Sleep as Circuit Ministers. The Revs. R. Martin and W. Toase had been invited, but neither had

accepted. Mr. Heaton entered the ministry in 1806, and for forty-three years he served God and Man in unintermitted labours and prayers. Of a loving disposition, he drew both adults and children to the Saviour. Diligent in study, and deep in knowledge of the word of God, he ably withstood heresies and errors, and by several publications confirmed the faith of many in the truths of the Gospel. In special efforts to promote revivals he was signally blessed, and he could rejoice over hundreds of souls added to Christ's Church. In 1849 he settled in Birmingham. Infirmities gradually increased, and the last three years of his life were spent in great feebleness. His change was eminently peaceful; he had finished his work, he had kept the faith, and with calm but joyous anticipation he passed to his reward.

In 1826 a fire took place at the preacher's house, some of the children were ill, and, when being attended to at night-time the bed-hangings caught fire, and considerable damage was done, which necessitated the removal of the family to other premises, and for five years the house now occupied by Mr. Ward was the minister's residence. The old house, after being put in repair, was let to a Mr. W. Bishop. When Mr. Heaton came into the Circuit the Rev. William Stones also came, being the first supernumerary minister to reside in Stourport.

Following Mr. Heaton came the Rev. John Bustard, who was a very kind and estimable gentleman; his colleague being Rev. James Mortimer, with Cleland Kirkpatrick as supernumerary. Mr. Kirkpatrick had had a wonderful career, and many were the exciting stories of adventure which he could tell. He had been taken by the pressgang, and for some years served his country as a soldier on

board a privateer, but getting tired of this kind of life, he, with three others, one dark night jumped overboard, and although he had but one arm, having lost the other in an engagement, he managed to swim nearly two miles to shore. Coming under the influence of the Methodists at Portsmouth, he renounced his former mode of living, gave his heart to God, and offered himself for the ministry, was accepted, and became as valiant a soldier for Christ as he had been for the King.

The number of members at this time was 179, the Circuit membership being 703, an increase of 68 in three years.

In 1831 the minister's house in High Street was given up, and the original residence, for a period of eight years, became again the Preacher's abode. Stourport this year collected £4 16s. 0d. for the School Fund, £3 1s. 6d. Chapel Fund, while the Yearly Collection amounted to £6 7s. 9d., and the July collections to £3 5s. 0d., besides the ordinary collections.

In 1835 the Rev. Josiah Goodwin completed his five years ministry in the Circuit. He had been invited to succeed Mr. Stanley in 1822, but the invitation was not accepted. Mr. Goodwin was one of the most learned men in the connexion; he was a master of English literature, and possessed a large and valuable library. He died 16th March, 1866, in the eighty-second year of his age, and fifty-eighth of his ministry.

For some time previous to 1835 the only musical instrument for assisting the singing was a bass viol, played by Mr. Thomas Wright, who was assisted on special occasions by Mr. Thomas Wheeldon, with his flute. A great change now

took place in the erection of an organ, probably among the earliest used in Methodist places of worship. Organs had not found great favour with the majority of the people, and Conference had on more than one occasion deprecated the use of them; and it was only by permission of that august assembly, and a plain proof that the erection of them would cause no financial embarrassment to the petitioning societies, that their erection was allowed. Adam Clarke, when speaking of congregational singing, condemned the use of musical instruments in the gross, and organs in particular as "heathenish accompaniments" and as "contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel, and the spirituality of that worship which God requires, as darkness is contrary to light," and he further expressed his persuasion that "if these abuses are not corrected, the time is not far distant when singing will cease to be a part of Divine worship." The Stourport Methodists, however, do not appear to have been of that opinion; nor did the erection of the organ, judging by the noble way in which subscriptions were forthcoming, cause any financial trouble to the Society. Among the subscribers to the organ fund were: G. Wright, £26; G. Baldwin, £20; E. Baldwin, £10; E. Lewty, £10; H. E. Stanley, £5; G. Corbett, £4. The first organist was Mr. Pearce Baldwin.

The ministers for 1836-7 were the Revs. William Davies and William Bytheway. The following year the Rev. Richard Waddy, Chairman of the Birmingham and Shrewsbury District, was appointed Superintendent of the Circuit, and took up his residence in Lichfield Street, he being the first minister to reside there. This house became, for the space of forty years, the dwelling-place of the Superintendent Minister. Mr. Waddy was one of

the foremost ministers in the connexion, and served on all the principal committees. He is described as "a tall, portly Yorkshireman," and is still remembered by a few.

In 1839 was celebrated the Centenary of Methodism, and on the 28th January of that year a public meeting was held in the Chapel, which commenced at half-past six. There is no record left of the proceedings of that meeting, but doubtless it was full of enthusiasm, and all had "a good time." A tea meeting was also held on Monday, Oct. 28th, in the Schoolroom, to commemorate the same event, tea commencing at six o'clock. On the 9th of April of the same year, Mr. Waddy's son, afterwards Dr. Waddy and a President of the Conference, preached in our Chapel from the words, "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." Mr. Waddy was the grandfather of His Honour Judge Waddy, of the Sheffield County Court, and sometime Member of Parliament for the Gainsborough Division of Lincolnshire. At the close of Mr. Waddy's ministry in 1840, the members of Society numbered 140, contributing £25 to the Quarter Board. The Circuit membership at this time stood at 637.

On Oct. 1st, 1840, Mr. George Pearce Baldwin died, in his 52nd year. He had been one of the chief supporters of the cause, and had held several offices, including those of Circuit Steward and Class Leader.

The Rev. William Woolsey was the next minister to reside at Stourport. His ministry was

highly instructive and practical, and he was esteemed a sound expositor of the Scriptures. He was a man of genuine and enlightened piety and of great integrity, firm in purpose, mild in his disposition, and modest and unobtrusive in his manners. He died in great peace, 15th January, 1848.

On the sixth of May, 1844, the Chapel was registered for the Solemnisation of Marriages; the first to be married were Thomas Cook and Miss Ward.

On the Plans for this year are the names of thirty-one local preachers, only five of whom were to be found on the Plan of 1825. The Plan for the March quarter of 1844 shews the name of John Mantle as a local preacher on trial. Mr. Mantle was well-known in local Methodism, and for the long period of over fifty years it was his great pleasure to preach the Gospel of Christ. He was for many years a Class-leader; and also served the Circuit as Steward for two periods of time. No meeting seemed complete without his presence, and his utterances were always listened to with respect. Many were the stories he could tell of his experiences as a local preacher, and he was ever ready by advice, gathered from the experience of years, to help those younger brethren who needed guidance and sympathy. No stress of weather ever kept him from his appointments, and whatever the distance he had to walk, it was always cheerfully done. The night preceding the Sabbath on which he was once appointed to preach at Frith Common had been a very snowy one. When he started the walk of eleven miles, the snow was of a considerable depth, and, on reaching his destination, he found the chapel closed, the people evidently thinking no preacher would venture through such weather. There was

nothing to be done but to start home again through the increasing snow, and after a terribly long journey of twenty-two miles, he reached home utterly exhausted. During his last illness he suffered much, but without complaint. He died 12th June, 1894, aged 75 years.

The Foreign Missionary Meeting of this year was addressed by the Rev. Thomas Pennington (of Sheffield), and Messrs. Tyndall and Evans. The collectors for that year were: Mrs. Lewty, Misses Baldwin, Raine, Browning, Rutter, Cook, Mrs. Summerfield, and Edward Baldwin. The public collections amounted to £26 0s. 7d., the total for the Society being £51 12s. 9d., and a Circuit total of £184 0s. 2d. This amount was exceeded in the following year, Stourport collecting £77 6s. 3½d., and the Circuit, £205 10s. 8d. The deputation for the year was the Revs. Geden, Fox, and Rawlings.

The Rev. Simeon Noall, who concluded his ministry here in 1844, was a very loving and earnest man, who even till old age lost none of the fervour of youth, sometimes prolonging the Sunday Evening Prayer Meeting till ten o'clock.

Previous to 1846 there appears to have been no Chapel Anniversary Services held; but in this year sermons were preached by the Rev. George Browne Macdonald, the collections realizing £20 16s. 0d.

There were at this time eleven Society Classes, led by Thomas Kaine (whose Sunday class numbered 12, Wednesday class 8); Mr. Carr's, 7; Abraham Jones's, 22; Joseph Williams', 27; Henry Watkins', 9; Thomas Ward's, 14; Isaac Summerhill's, 28; Henry Cook's, 13; M. A. Baldwin's Monday class, 25; Thursday class, 9. A total of 174.

The Rev. William Clough, the Superintendent Minister, died here on the 10th December of this year, after a long and painful illness. Born at Bishopthorpe, near York, May 30th, 1799, he, in early life became the subject of religious impressions, and after fulfilling some subordinate offices in the Church he offered himself as a candidate for the ministry, and was accepted. After labouring for a short time in England he was sent by Conference to the West Indies, where for nearly nine years he laboured with great zeal and success, but on account of ill-health was obliged to return to this country. His mind was richly imbued with Evangelical truth, the result of much reading and prayerful meditation. His preaching was earnest, affectionate, and persuasive; always acceptable, and in some of his Circuits very successful. His illness had at times a depressing influence on his mind, but he was enabled by Divine grace to submit patiently to the will of God, often repeating with great emotion,—“The will of the Lord be done.” His last words were, “I am going, but all is well!” He died in the forty-eighth year of his age and the twenty-fourth of his ministry. His body lies in Mitton Churchyard.

In 1847 the great Dr. Jabez Bunting visited Stourport and preached the Chapel Anniversary sermons, one of them was his celebrated sermon on Justification by Faith. The collections amounted to £26 4s.

The Rev. Joseph Hollis was superintendent minister for 1847-8, and is remembered as a very powerful and original preacher. In the latter year Dr. James Dixon preached the Chapel Anniversary sermons, one of his texts was from Ephesians I., 2-3v., “Grace be with you, and peace, from God our

Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ." The collections amounted to £21 9s. 6d.

On the 12th of June, 1849, Dr. Robert Newton was chief speaker at the public meeting for Foreign Missions, and for two hours and a half he kept the congregation spellbound. This meeting has been described to the writer by one who attended as one of immense enthusiasm, everyone being delighted with the wonderful oration. Having spoken for an hour and a half, the speaker suggested that it was time for him to close, but loud cries of "No, no" "Go on, go on," compelled him to speak for another hour. The collections and subscriptions this year were £47 2s. 10d. This was the only occasion, it is believed, of Dr. Newton visiting Stourport.

The Baldwin family were at this time the chief supporters of Methodism, many of the older pillars having passed away or removed to other towns. The Wrights had removed some years before to Bristol, and the Hill family too had left the town. The Yates family attended the chapel, but do not appear to have taken a very prominent part in the work. Mr. Adam Yates was for some years an annual subscriber to the Foreign Mission Fund; the names also of Mr. Thomas and Mr. Daniel Zachary are found among the contributors to the same fund.

In 1852 the Rev. Benjamin John came to the Circuit. Entering the ministry in 1835, he travelled until 1873, when he became a Supernumerary. He was a diligent student, directing his attention to a wide range of subjects. His preaching was methodical and Evangelical, and most appreciated by mature Christians. He was never known to

speak a word of detraction, even though smarting under what he believed to be injurious treatment. His closing years were marked by extreme feebleness, and he welcomed the Master's call, which came to him on September 29th, 1889.

Following Mr. John came the Rev. William James Shrewsbury, the well-known Missionary, whose life has been written by his son. Entering the ministry in 1815 he was sent to the West Indies, where he laboured for nine years. While stationed at Barbadoes he endured much persecution, and was often in danger of his life. His experiences were most exciting, and his life reads more like romance than reality. From 1826 to 1834 he laboured in Africa, and was made a great blessing to many, planting the Gospel where no white man had ventured before. His whole life was peculiarly associated with sorrow, yet sorrow which drew him nearer to God and made him a stronger and better man. Not only was he a good preacher but a writer also. He invariably opened morning service with hymn 608, "Before Jehovah's awful throne,"—his reason for this being that the congregation could always begin the public worship of the Sabbath by a familiar hymn and tune, and with words which saint and sinner alike could employ. He was a man mighty in prayer, and his addresses to the Deity were those of a man who was habitually awed and governed by the Divine Presence. His ministry was made a great blessing, particularly at Kidderminster. During the greater part of his residence here his wife was an invalid, and his bedridden and blind mother required constant attention; after seven months illness she passed away, and was buried in Mitton Churchyard. Visitors there may, by taking the path to the left, come upon her humble

stone, inscribed with the following: "The grave of Mrs. Mary Shrewsbury, born Feb. 25th, 1774, died Sept. 22nd, 1857. Aged 84 years."

God, my Redeemer lives,
And ever from the skies,
Looks down and watches all my dust,
Till He shall bid it rise.

Mr. Shrewsbury was in great request for the Missionary platform, his last appearance being in the Grosvenor Street Chapel, Manchester. Now full of years, and leaning upon the top of his staff, he began his speech with a verse from hymn 206:—

What am I, O thou glorious God!
And what my father's house to Thee,
That Thou such mercies hast bestowed
On me, the vilest reptile, me!
I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at Thy boundless love.

—He died on his mother's birthday, Feb. 25th, 1866.

On February 19th, 1857, Mr. Enoch Baldwin, senior, died. He had several times held the office of Circuit Steward, and was also Treasurer of the Sunday School for many years. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Shrewsbury, from the words: "The Godly man ceaseth."

About this time considerable alterations were made to the chapel, but there is nothing known as to what they were, except that the organ was taken from the gallery and placed in its present position.

The Rev. John Wilson was the Stourport minister for the next two years; following him came Rev. J. T. Sangar, who is remembered as a most lovable man.

The membership of the Society at the March quarter for 1860 was 112, comprised in the following classes:—Mrs. Baldwin's, 20; Mr. Cook's, 7; Mr. Mantle's, 34; Mr. Parrott's, 12; Mr. Smith's, 6; Mr. Watkins's, 3; Mr. Williams's, 21.

The Rev. James Egan Moulton was appointed to the Circuit in 1863, but owing to ill-health was obliged to remove at the end of twelve months. He was father of the late Dr. Moulton and Mr. Fletcher Moulton, Q.C., M.P.

On the 24th October, 1869, the Circuit sustained a great loss by the death of Mr. Thomas Bough, a young man of piety, zeal and intelligence, and from whom much was expected. He manifested great zeal in Temperance work, and, to forward the cause in Stourport, he erected the Temperance Hall near his residence in Bewdley Road. He died while on a visit to Matlock, being then in his 24th year.

In 1870 the question of dividing the Circuit again came up for discussion, but nothing was done.

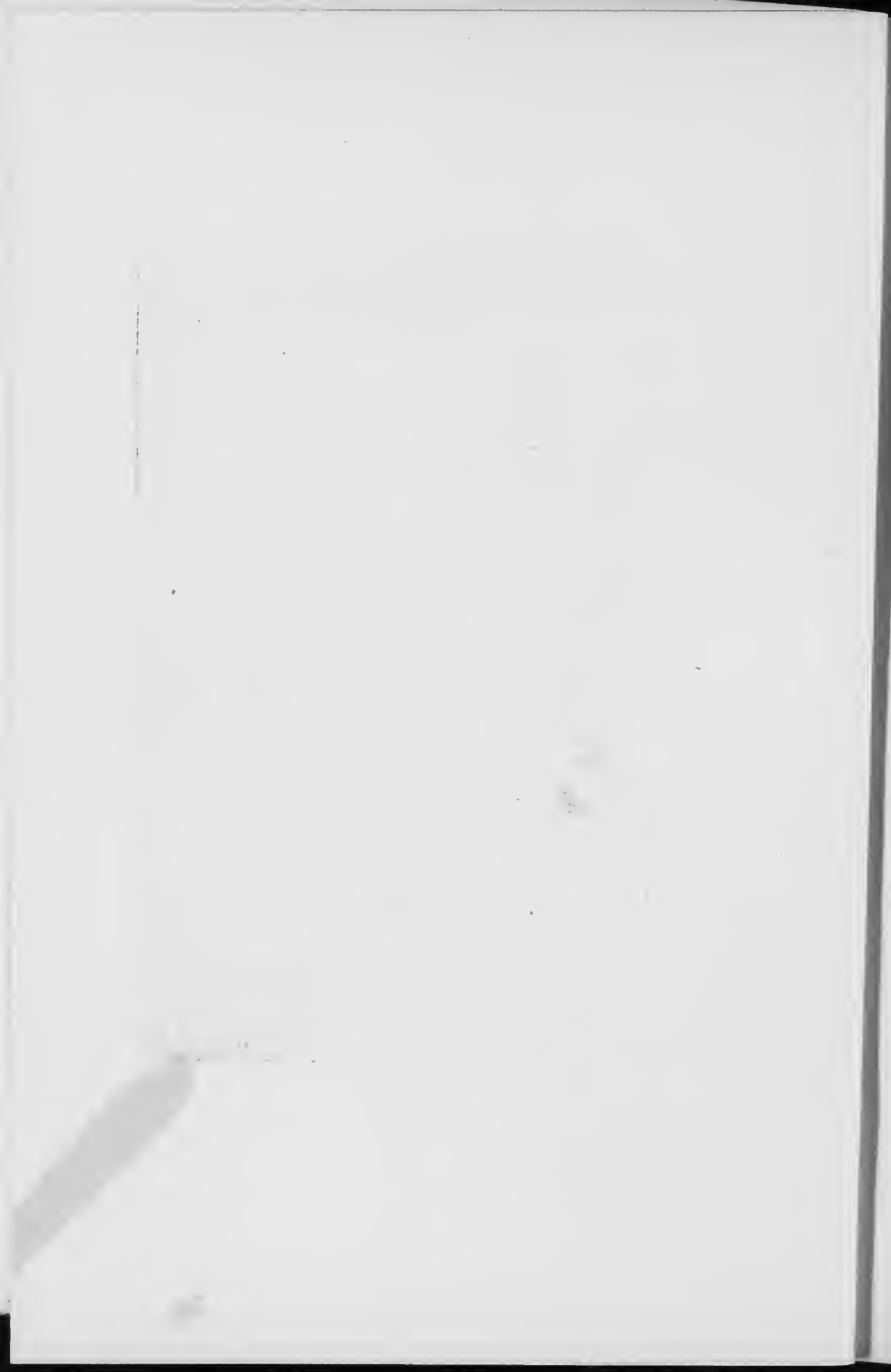
In 1874 considerable alterations were made to the Chapel, at a cost of £1000—all of which was subscribed at the time. The alterations considerably improved the appearance of the chapel and brought it up to its present state.

In 1875 the Rev. G. F. Driver came into the town, and superintended the work of the Circuit for two years, afterwards staying as a supernumerary and taking charge of a class. As a class leader he was most successful, giving sound and helpful advice to each member.

In 1878, the Society and Circuit generally sustained a great loss by the death of Mr. T. J. Baldwin who for many years had been closely connected with the work, entering heart and soul into whatever he



THE MANSE, STOURPORT.



undertook. He had served the Society in most of the offices open to laymen. As leader of the choir he took great delight in the musical portion of the service, caring most for that kind of praise in which all the congregation could join. His sympathies were wide and comprehensive. The same hand that freely distributed to the poor of the neighbourhood was opened wide when a call came from a far-off region. He was a great friend of Foreign Missions, and was never more delighted than when taking the chair at mission meetings in town or country.

His usefulness was not confined to strictly religious work only; he served his town as well as his church, being instrumental (with the assistance of Mr. Thomas Zachary), in founding the Stourport Reading Institution, and was for many years its president. He was also for some years Chairman of the Local Board.

The Sunday before his death he had started with Mrs. Baldwin to attend morning service, but, after proceeding a short distance, was obliged to return. Although his illness was known to be serious, hope was entertained that he would recover, but it was not to be so, for, on the Wednesday morning following he passed peacefully away. His funeral was attended by every token of sorrow,—shops all but closed, blinds drawn, and hundreds of spectators, many in tears, testified to the great esteem in which this good man was held. A funeral sermon was preached on the following Sunday by the Rev. Charles Povah, who took as his text 1 Thess. iv, 13-18. All the seats were occupied, and although chairs and forms were placed in the aisles many persons were unable to find room.

The Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit, held 23rd September, unanimously agreed to place on their minute book the following record:—

“The decease of our beloved brother, Mr. Thomas Joseph Baldwin, on the 14th of last month, is an event so greatly affecting our Circuit that this Quarterly Meeting, before proceeding with the business of the day, desires to record its sense of the loss which has befallen our Societies. Mr. Baldwin’s courteous and gentlemanly bearing, his high integrity and unfailing kindness, greatly endeared him to us and our people. During the few years he was one of our Circuit Stewards he showed much concern for the prosperity of the work of God, and tried to strengthen the hands of the ministers; while his liberality indicated that he sought to be a faithful dispenser of the gifts entrusted to him by his Lord. We eagerly hoped that he would be continued to his family and the church for some years; but meekly and reverently submit to the inscrutable wisdom of Him who has the keys of death, and pray that we and all our members may by this bereavement be stimulated to fulfil every duty with all our might.

During the ministry of the Rev. Charles Povah the Mutual Improvement Society was founded, the meetings being chiefly of a religious character. In 1878 the present Minister’s House was erected, Mr. Povah being the first to dwell there.

On April 19th, 1884, died Mrs. Enoch Baldwin senr., in the her 93rd year. She had a lifelong connection with Methodism, and met in Mr. William Hill’s class so far back as 1812. Throughout her long life she manifested the greatest interest in the Cause of Christ. For thirty years she was the superintendent of the girls’ portion of the Sunday

School, and for sixty years she undertook the management of the Christmas Quarterly Meeting Dinner, nothing pleasing her more than to see a full gathering on that occasion.

In 1885 the long-talked-of division of the Circuit took place, Kidderminster forming the head of the new Circuit and taking over Cookley, Forest, Frith Common, and Shatterford. A meeting to consider the advisability of re-uniting the Circuits was held about three years ago, which was attended by the Rev. Joseph Bush, Albert Bishop, Joseph Howard, and Frederick Law, besides several influential laymen. The greatest cordiality was manifest amongst the brethren; but there seemed no great desire for reunion, and things were allowed to remain as they were.

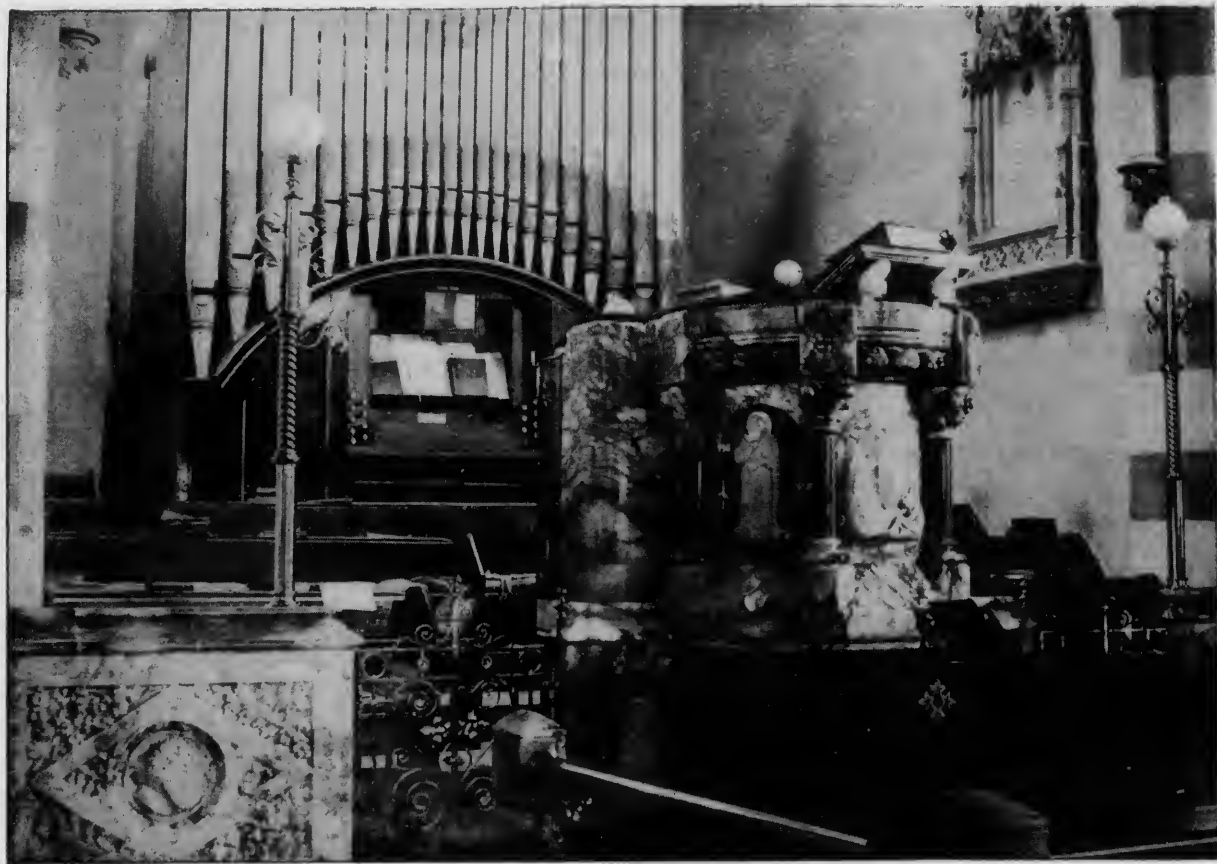
On November 1st, 1890, died Mr. Thomas Baldwin Worth, a young man of great promise, who took great interest in the affairs of the society. As secretary of the Mutual Improvement Society he did much to infuse new life into that institution. As Poor Steward, and in various other ways, he served the church. As a devout and constant attendant upon the means of grace, he was an example to many. From him the church expected much, and it was with the greatest sorrow that the society heard of his decease.

In November, 1894, a four days' Bazaar was held in the Town Hall, with the object of reducing, as much as possible, the debt which long rested upon the trust premises. The scheme was taken up with great enthusiasm, and at the close was pronounced a grand success. The offer of Mr. Enoch Baldwin to give twenty per cent upon the gross receipts, and the indomitable pluck and energy shewn by Mr. J. W. Powell, fired everyone with the

desire to do their very best ; with the result that £539 were raised. The Bazaar was opened by Mr. Biddulph Martin, M.P., and many old friends of Methodism were also present. There was a crowded attendance, despite the wretched weather ; and the greatest interest was taken in the proceedings.

After having been closed for many weeks for renovations and alterations, the Chapel was reopened on Tuesday, September 26th, 1896. Very considerable alterations were carried out. The roof of the organ chamber was raised, and new light added. The walls of the Chapel were cleared and re-plastered, and the whole of the interior cleansed. The greatest embellishment of the Chapel is the handsome alabaster pulpit, erected by Mr. Ward, in memory of his father, who was for many years one of the chief members of the society. The carving of the figures inserted in the front and sides of the pulpit is exquisite, and the whole is a work of a high order. A few years before this Mr. Ward erected, at his own cost, (with the exception of the brass rails and gates,) the beautiful choir front, the alabaster supports, and the marble floor, these, with the pulpit forming what is probably not surpassed in any Methodist Church in this or any other country. The whole work, especially when lit up at night, presents a most beautiful sight.

The year 1897 had been looked forward to as the centenary year of the circuit's formation, and it was thought that something should be done to commemorate an event so interesting ; but circumstances precluded anything being done that year, but in April, 1898, Centenary Services were held. On the 24th, sermons were preached by the Rev. H. J. Pope, D.D., of London, to large congregations ; the collections amounting to £20. On the Monday



THE PULPIT- WESLEYAN CHURCH, STOURPORT.



following a Tea Meeting was held in the School, to which nearly two-hundred sat down, the following ladies of the congregation giving the trays: Mrs. Baldwin, Mrs. J. G. Baldwin, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Worth, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. J. H. Jackson, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. Pretty, Mrs. Owens (Bewdley), Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Haywood, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Butler, and Miss Horton. Afterwards a Public Meeting was held in the Church, presided over by Alderman George Holdsworth, J.P., of Kidderminster. Among those present were Revs. Thomas Allen (chairman of the district), Wesley Butters, Frederick Law, Rowland Sturt, and many others.

Alderman Holdsworth briefly traced the history of Methodism at Stourport, and spoke of the great interest the Baldwin, Worth, and other families had taken in the church, which was full of hallowed associations.

The Rev. F. Law desired to take that, the first public opportunity of speaking of the work which had been carried out by Mr. Ward. The erection of the pulpit and the communion rails, in alabaster, was a memorial of the reverence and love of Mr. Ward, who revered and loved one who was for many years a pillar of the church.

Mr. J. W. Powell made a brief financial statement with regard to the renovation scheme; and the writer gave an account of the history of the church.

Rev. Wesley Butters said they were disposed to gild the past, and place a halo round the heads of men and women who had served the generations of the past. The past was glorious, and whatever good was done was of God. He desired to remind them, especially the young people present, of the high quality of the religious life and character

of the men of the past ; and to assure them that apart from such lofty character, no real and lasting good could be done. He pleaded with them to cultivate in a higher degree the spirit of reverence in worship, and a more conspicuous use of all the privileges which Methodism afforded. The Methodism which had worked so many wonders in the past would not be wanting in spiritual power in the future if they were possessed with the spirit which animated the life-work of their fathers.

The Rev. Thomas Allen, referring to Wesley's diary relative to his visits to Stourport, said one remark threw a strong side light on a feature of his time. When preaching at the Wesleyan Church Wesley said "A certain number of clergy were present, and they were as quiet and attentive as the other people." Mr. Allen urged upon young people the importance of studying the history of Methodism. It would be found most interesting, and would do them more good than reading the water-and-milk stories now so popular. History was not merely a chronicle of events, it was a growth, and the historian needed to be followed by the philosopher who traced facts to the causes which produced them. The first thing which struck them about the Methodist movement was that it was providentially timed in its birth. It arose when the world needed it. The Reformation had emancipated the human judgment and conscience, but it did not loosen the tongue of the Evangelist. The spiritual condition of the Church of England was at the time very low, and the Puritan-Churches held Calvinistic doctrines, and carried those teachings to their logical consequences. Methodism was not founded by a party, but by a remarkable man. They also possessed an advantage in the fact that the founder of Methodism

was not only a great Evangelist, but also a great scholar and a perfect Christian gentleman. During the century they had built up educational institutions which were worthy of any Church, and they had produced scholars of world-wide fame and usefulness. It was urged by some that Methodists had departed from the teachings of Wesley. He admitted Wesley's sincere attachment to the Church of England, but he took steps to form a separate church; organized societies, built preaching houses, ordained presbyters for England and America, and if all that could be reconciled with the theory of Established Churchmanship the speaker would be greatly surprised. The final expression of Wesley's mind with regard to that matter was not to be found in occasional sentences in his writings or sermons, but in carefully prepared public documents which were intended to be permanent and authoritative. Methodism was a great spiritual movement, and had always exercised a mediative influence between conflicting parties. In their relation to other churches they declared themselves to be the friends of all, the enemies of none.

On the motion of the Rev. W. Stevinson, B.A., seconded by the Rev. Rowland Sturt, cordial thanks were tendered to the Chairman and all those who had contributed to the success of the Centenary Celebrations.

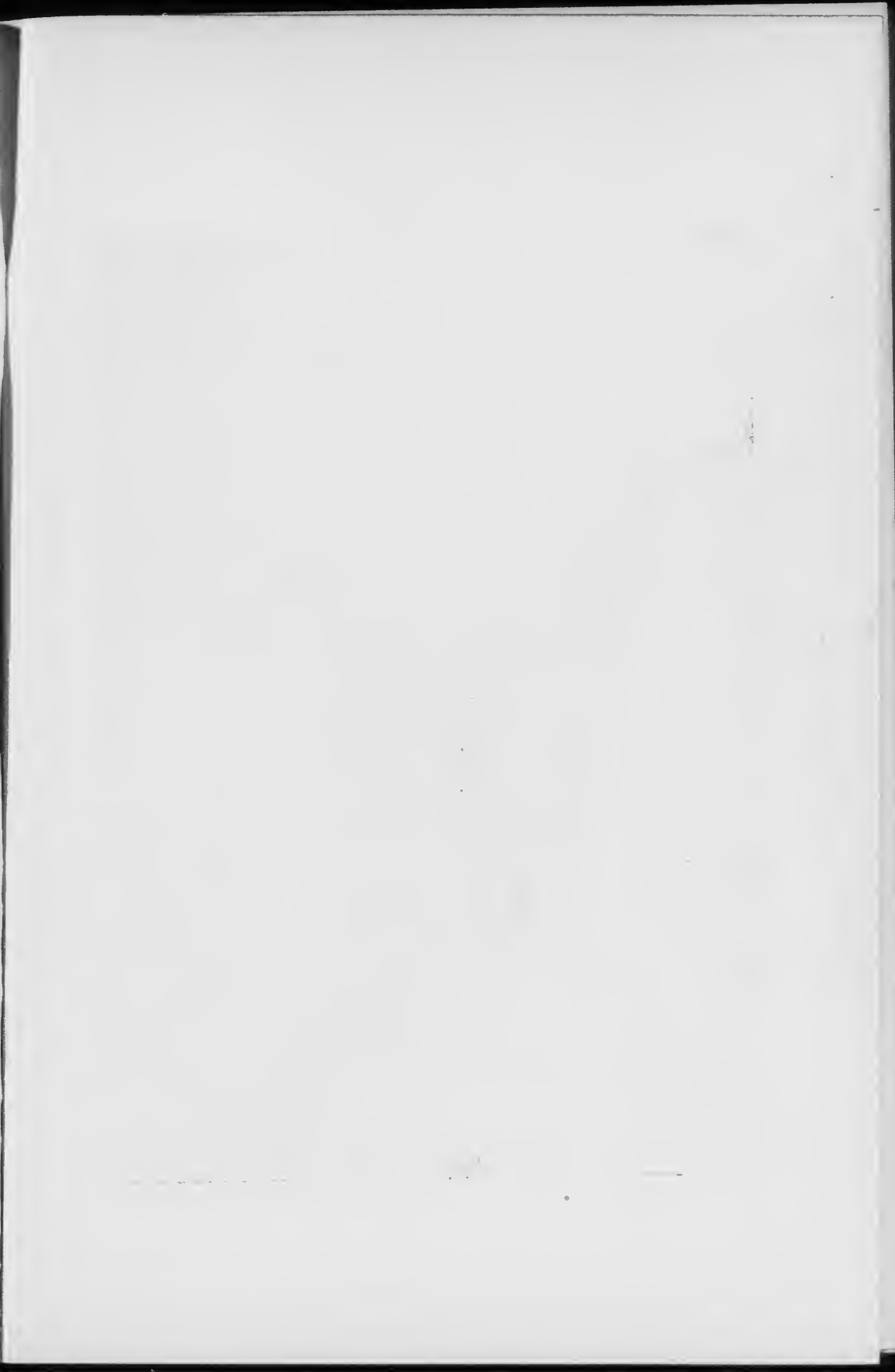
In the early part of the present year a meeting was held in the Church to consider what the Society could do in regard to the Twentieth Century Fund. The meeting was addressed by John Barnsley, Esq., of Birmingham, who, in a vigorous and lucid speech laid before the meeting the objects of the Fund. Great interest was taken in the proceedings, and promises were made to the extent of over £100.

A strong feeling has long existed in the Church for the necessity of a Wesley Guild in connection with Stourport Methodism. At a meeting held in the Lecture Room it was resolved that a Guild be established, and on September 15th officers were elected. Since then each meeting has been remarkably well attended, and the greatest interest shown. The various papers given have been much appreciated—that by the Rev. R. Sturt on Wednesday Nov. 8th 1899, on “Self Culture” being much enjoyed.

It is very gratifying to know that the Trustees have in hand a scheme for improving the surroundings of the Church by removing the old houses, which have long been an eyesore, and laying out the site with turf and shrubs. This will be a great improvement. The possibilities of our Church are greater than ever, and by the grace of God it may become a great centre of religious life. Its walls have echoed to the voice of Methodism’s saintliest and most eloquent preachers. How many have received the blessing of forgiveness under its roof only the “Great Day” will reveal. It has been hallowed by the prayers of generations, and around it cling associations dear to their descendants.

In closing this history of our Church there occurs to the writer the names of old worthies who should not be forgotten:—Hy. Cooke (local preacher) T. Green (printer) who supplied Bewdley Sunday School with reward books, J. T. Greensill, J. Williams, Jane Stringer (who knew nearly all Wesley’s hymns by heart), W. Stanton, T. Howell and Abraham Jones, all of whom served the Church in some way or another.


MAY GOD BLESS OUR DEAR OLD SANCTUARY.





WESLEYAN SUNDAY SCHOOL, STOURPORT.

STOURPORT SUNDAY SCHOOL.

T is impossible now to determine the exact age of the Sunday School. Effort has been made to find some account of its earliest days, but without success. The School banner gives the date of its foundation as 1813, but this is wrong as the treasurer's book goes back to 1807, and that one speaks of a former book. The first page is suggestive of a large and flourishing school, and there can be but little doubt of its being one of the first established in Methodism. The Hills, Wrights, and Baldwins would, most probably, be among its earlier officers and supporters, and the place for meeting would in all probability be the Chapel. The first schoolroom which can be determined was situated immediately in front of the Chapel, and was partly taken down during the alterations of 1874.

The first anniversary sermon of which there is any record was preached by the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, a former minister of the Circuit, and who afterwards became President of the Conference, the collections for this year amounted to £23 12s. 6d.

In the following year the Rev. Joseph Taylor, also a former minister, preached the sermons, and £27 10s. 4d. was collected.

The Rev. John Sanders Pipe, well known as a preacher, was chosen to preach the sermons in 1813, at which the collections amounted to £35 5s. 10d.,

his expenses being £1 5s. 6d. The treasurer's account for that year gives an item of 6s. 8d. for ale for singers; this needs a little explanation. Let us, in imagination, travel back to that year; May 26th falls on a Sunday, and the Charity sermons are to be preached at the Wesleyan Chapel, Stourport. Let us attend; we first of all see those children who have been chosen as singers standing on either side of the walk leading down to the Chapel. Not only are they there to bow and curtsy to the gathering congregation, but each boy and girl has a drink of beer, which liquid has been fetched for that purpose from the "Black Star." This will explain the 6s. 8d. for ale.

Many years after this queer custom was discontinued it was the habit, on the Anniversary Sunday, to have the boys in a line on one side of the walk and the girls on the other, to show their respect to those who were coming to hear them sing.

In the early days of the school it was the custom of the minister to attend for a certain time to catechise and lecture the children, and if it was not possible for him to be there, then this duty fell to the lot of the superintendent or his deputy, and at a meeting of the committee, held 25th December, 1815, it was resolved that a former resolution bearing upon this subject should be enforced.

The Secretary for the year 1814 was Mr. Enoch Baldwin, who was followed by Mr. Robert Hill, he being succeeded by Mr. Edward Russell. It appears to have been the custom at one time for the secretary and treasurer to hold office for one year only, but gradually this was given up, and the office was sometimes held by one person almost as long as he liked.

It is a great pity that no old registers or minute books of the School can be found, as they would, doubtless, afford much interesting information. What the school hours were in those far away days is not known, but most likely longer time was spent in lessons than at the present. For many years, in the summer time, lessons were given in the Chapel yard, benches being carried out, and classes arranged. The annual Whit-Monday tea was also held in the Chapel yard, and it is only of comparatively recent years that the treats have been held at other places. Mrs. Carter, who kept a confectioner's shop in High Street, for many years supplied the provisions. She was also for some time one of the Superintendents of the girls' school, together with the late Mrs. Enoch Baldwin, senr., who held that office for the long period of thirty years.

There were at one time many annual subscribers to the school funds, among the first being the Messrs. Wright, Rowley, Hill, Yapp, Partridge, Russell, Young, Baldwin and others; followed in after years by Charles Winnall, Jonathan Worthington, the Messrs. Yates, Matthew Heath, George Baldwin, Enoch Baldwin, James Swan, Joseph Rogers, and other well-known Stourport names, whose subscriptions ranged from 5s. up to £2. Much of the money was spent in clothes and shoes for the children. At one time reading and writing were taught, and many are the entries in Treasurer's book for spelling books, Quills, ink, &c., but gradually all these things were left off and the school assumed its modern form.

Some of Methodism's finest preachers have occupied the pulpit on the anniversary Sunday, among others the Rev. W. H. Loxdale Eden, who appears to have been popular in Stourport, for he came on several occasions. Other earlier preachers were Revs. Wm. Lord, A. G. Jewitt, Thos. Martin,

Edward Oakes, John Rattenbury, John Ward. In 1834 the Rev. George Steward preached the sermons when one of his texts was "I am glorified in them"—John 17, 10v. His visit was, no doubt, of great interest, as he had gone out from the Circuit only six years before. The following year the Rev. Wm. Naylor preached from Romans 12c. 1v., "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The Rev. John Lomas preached in 1837, and in 1841 the Rev. G. B. Macdonald took for his text "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The collections this year amounted to £33 1s. 3½d. The sermons for 1846 were preached by the Circuit minister, the Rev. W. Clough, and on the following day the great Dr. Joseph Beaumont, of London, conducted services in the chapel. The collections for both days were £43 19s. 10d. The Rev. John Bedford came in 1848 and discoursed upon I. Cor. 15c. 58v., and Heb. 13c. 16v., "But to do good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Others who have preached are: Revs. J. R. Ridsdale, W. H. Cornforth, J. Vanes, John Watson (in 1862-3-8), G. F. Driver (in 1864), John Hall; and in later years Ishmael Jones, G. Mather, N. J. Willis, W. M. Briggs, S. Naish, J. H. Norton, F. W. Macdonald.

When the minister removed into Lichfield St., his residence, now the Lecture Room, was converted into Schoolrooms, the girls occupying the higher room, the boys being upon the ground floor, and it was the custom for some years, on the first

Sunday afternoon of the month, for the girls to join the boys, when a prayer meeting was held. The Superintendents for the girls were, for many years, as has been before stated, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Enoch Baldwin, senr., and Mr. John Baldwin. The oldest remembered Superintendent for the boys' school being Mr. Isaac Browning, a seedsman who lived in High Street. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Thomas Ward for many years occupied that position, they being followed by Messrs. Benjamin and Isaac Jones. In 1875, through the liberality of Mr. T. J. Baldwin, the present commodious Schools were erected at a cost of £1,000, and upon their being occupied, Mr. John G. Baldwin became sole Superintendent, and under his management the School became noted especially for the order and decorum which the scholars observed. Mr. Baldwin was, in the general opinion, a model Superintendent, always displaying the greatest interest in teachers and scholars, being most happy when there were signs of spiritual fruit, and the greatest regret was felt, when, acting under medical advice, he found it necessary to retire. Upon his relinquishing the office he was presented by the teachers with an illuminated album of views, which contained the names of the teachers and newly-elected Superintendent. The late lamented Mr. A. E. Hardwick was elected to fill the position, he being followed by Mr. Isaac Pretty and Mr. T. Pritchard. Upon the retirement of the former, Mr. I. L. Wedley was elected in his place, he and Mr. Pritchard now being joint occupiers of that position. Besides those mentioned the following have held the position of Treasurer to the Schools:—Edward Russell, E. Lewty, junr., Thomas Webb, John Russell, jun., John Carr, J. T. Greensill, E. Baldwin for 27 years, Thomas Jackson, the present Treasurer being Mr. Felton, with Mr. J. W. Powell as Secretary.

The Annual March Tea Meeting is held in connection with the School, the proceeds going to the School funds. For very many years has this gathering taken place, and it seems to lose none of its power of attraction. Many have gone out from our School who have made their mark in the world. Some have become ministers, and others successful merchants, and many in other towns and other lands received their first religious impressions and instruction there.

MAY GOD BLESS OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL.

A PAGE FROM TREASURER'S BOOK.

DR.	£	s.	d.
1807.			
May 20.—Mr. Hill's bill for sundries, Cotton, Muslin, Tape, and Clock	2	7	3
G. Gower, Hymns	18	0	
J. Edmondson's Expenses	11	0	
M. Parson, Horse-hire to supply Mr. Edmondson's place in preaching the charity sermon	5	0	
Mr. Smith's bill of Birmingham, for Bonnets	6	14	0
C. Gloyne. for Books	5	6	
Copy Books, Pens, &c.	5	0	
July.—Mr. Hill, 78 Hats	9	2	0
Mr. Dipper, 18 Bonnets	1	12	9
Two sets of small Fireirons	9	0	
Sept. 29.—Mr. Harding, Books	4	16	11
Dewsbury's wife, cleaning school to date	0	10	6
Half ton of Coals and wheeling up	0	9	0
Dec. 25.—Dewsbury's wife, cleaning school, $\frac{1}{4}$ year	5	3	
Josh. Jackson, per Mr. Young's order	5	0	
Books for girl's school	5	0	
Do. for Treasurer's Accounts	6	0	
	27	7	2
Balance in hand of Treasurer carried forward	13	13	5
	£43	0	7

CONTRA.		CR.		
1807.		£	s.	d.
April	By Balance from Old Book	2	3	4
	Subscriptions for this year ending 30th inst. :—			
	Mr. John Thomas	10	6	
	Mr. Thomas Collins	5	0	
	Miss Esther Collins	2	6	
	Mr. Richard Yapp	5	0	
	Miss E. Rowley	5	0	
	Mr. Sam'l Partridge	5	0	
	Mr. Thos. Wright	2	2	0
	Mr. Thos. Raine	10	6	
	Mr. Willm. Hill, jun.	7	0	
	Mr. Willm. Hill, sen.	1	1	0
	Mr. Thos. Rowley	1	0	0
	Mr. Saml. Wagstaff	10	6	
	Mr. Jno. Wright	1	1	9
	Mr. G. Wright	10	5	
	Miss Wright	10	6	
	Mr. S. Young	5	0	
	T. and T. Wright, jun.	5	0	
June 8.	Collection made at a sermon preached by			
	Rev. J. Edmondson	23	12	6
	Donation, Mrs Boden	1	11	6
	„ Miss Bailey	10	6	
„ 24.	Rent of Schoolroom, due this day, to			
	Miss Dobbins	2	12	0
„ 25.	Do do do	2	12	0
	Forfeits	1	9	
		43	0	7

KIDDERMINSTER.

SO far back as 1739 the Wesleys had been invited to Kidderminster, as the following extract from a letter written by Joseph Williams, and directed to Charles Wesley, will shew. It bears date Oct. 17th, 1739 :—

“I forgot, at parting, to renew my humble request to you for a line at your convenience, which I now humbly desire, to let me know when we may expect you or Mr. John Wesley here. I have provided you a field, larger than any bowling green, and enclosed with a high wall, to preach in, and cannot but greatly hope, if you could continue awhile with us, your and our Lord might reap a plentiful harvest here and hereabout, and that a wide and effectual door would be opened to you. But you may be sure of many adversaries, and none more violent than our Vicar. I dearly love your religious society; my heart is knit to them, and my prayers are daily for you and for them, that they may abound more and more in every grace, in every good word and work, and that ‘the God of Hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.’ ”

It was not till 1771 that Mr. Wesley paid his first visit to Kidderminster, and of that visit he says but very little, merely remarking, “I had the good pleasure of spending an hour in Kidderminster, with

that good man, Mr. Fawcett." There can be but little doubt of a Society being formed before Mr. Wesley came, but where the members met to hold their meetings is not now known. Exactly ten years afterwards another visit was paid, when he preached "In the large meeting house to a numerous congregation." March 22nd found him again at Kidderminster, having travelled from Worcester. He writes, Friday, 22nd,—“About two in the morning we had such a storm as I never remember. Before it began, our chamber door clattered to and fro exceedingly, so it sounded to us, although, in fact, it never moved at all. I then distinctly heard the door open, and having a light, rose and went to it; but it was fast shut. Meantime, the window was wide open, I shut it, and went to sleep again. So deep a snow fell in the night, that we were afraid the roads would be impassable. However, we set out in the afternoon, and made shift to get to Kidderminster. We had a large congregation in the evening, though it was intensely cold, and another at seven in the morning, Saturday, 23rd, and all of them were deeply serious.” On Thursday, March 21st, 1788, Mr. Wesley was at Stourport, where he stayed the night, and journeyed next morning to Kidderminster, where he breakfasted at Mr. Pochin Lister’s “with a few very serious and pious friends.” Mr. Lister was one of the original trustees of the Stourport Chapel. After breakfast, Mr. Wesley set out for Birmingham, being met upon the way by Rev. Joseph Benson; the weather was very cold and snowy.

It was not till 1791 that a chapel was erected, which was only used for about nine or ten years, the present building coming into the Society’s possession very early in the present century.

One of the chief Methodists at this time was Mr. James Bell, a shopkeeper in Mill Street, and it was at his house that the Preacher usually stayed. Having preached at Bewdley on Thursday, he would proceed to Kidderminster the following day, conducting services there both on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, probably journeying back to Worcester in time for the evening service. In 1797 Kidderminster was the second preaching place upon the plan of the newly formed Stourport Circuit, and had a membership of 94. Why a much smaller town, and one which had a less membership than Kidderminster or Bewdley, was chosen as the head of the Circuit has been a wonder to many.

From 1797 to 1811 no records of the Society have been found. At the latter date there were 130 members, including six local preachers, contributing for the year £6 4s. 0d. to Kingswood School, £8 Yearly Collection, £5 5s. to Preachers' Fund and £4 0s. 9d. to the extra collection ordered by Conference. The Society at this time was composed of seven classes, in which the names Rogers, Griffiths, Morgan, Rowland, Marsden, Wright, Russell, Uncles Highway, Parker, and Jehu mostly predominate. The classes were led by William Gowen, Thomas Price, William Uncles, Mary Parker, Phœbe Uncles, Joseph Wright and Samuel Jehu.

Mr. Gowen was a Local Preacher as well as a class leader, and is remembered by some of the older members as being a good man, with long white hair, and bearing a striking resemblance to Mr. Wesley, and who lived to be nearly ninety. How long he was a preacher is not known, but probably more than fifty years, as his name is well up in the list of the plan for 1807, and it does not disappear until about 1843.

Mr. Samuel Jehu, who was leader of class number seven, was also a local preacher, and during the first half of the century was one of the most useful members of the Society. He was a foreman in one of the carpet manufactories, and to him Sir Josiah Mason owed nearly all the education he had. He was also at one time superintendent of the Sunday School.

Mary Parker, leader of the fourth class, was a most zealous and successful worker. When about seventeen years of age she joined the Methodists, and the union then formed was never broken until her death, she being at that time the oldest member of the Kidderminster Society. She was distinguished for her deep piety, sound judgment, energy of character, and great usefulness; and was universally respected for her good sense and blameless life.

In 1812 provision was made by the Circuit Steward for the accommodation of a married minister to reside at Kidderminster. Previous to this the second preacher had always been a young unmarried man and lived with the superintendent of the Circuit at Stourport; but it was now deemed advisable, in the interests of the Society, that a man should be stationed in Kidderminster. The first to reside there was the Rev. T. Lessey. Where his residence was situated is not known, but, when writing to a friend at Manchester, he says "Our house and situation are delightful, and we are among very kind friends." During this year there was an increase of sixty-one members.

The minister following Mr. Lessey was the Rev. William France, who was designed for the ministry of the Established Church; but an acquaintance with some members of the Wesleyan body led to his religious awakening, and his subsequent union

with that Church. He preached his first sermon when seventeen years old, and entered the ministry four years later. He possessed a vigorous mind, and his attainments, especially as a linguist, were considerable. His sermons were chiefly expository, and, while aiding the critical enquirer, they afforded at the same time instruction and comfort to the humble Christian. As a Pastor he was diligent and affectionate, and greatly beloved by his flock.

Rev. Richard Smetham resided at Kidderminster in 1817. He was a man who loved to be cheerful himself, and did all in his power to promote the happiness of those around him. He was a man of great humility and sincerity. He was diligent and punctual in his attention to all public duties, and in visiting the sick. His ministry was plain, and such as the poor could understand, whilst it edified those who had been favoured with superior advantages. Christ was his theme; and often whilst exhibiting Him as our Saviour and Mediator his labours were crowned with abundant tokens for good. In the year 1840 he became a Supernumerary and retired to his native town. He died Feb. 20th, 1847, in the 74th year of his age and 41st year of his ministry.

In 1820 the Missionary Branch Society for the Stourport Circuit was formed, and the first public meeting was held in Kidderminster Chapel, Mr. Edmondson in the chair. The sermons on the occasion were preached by the Revs. Aikenhead, Edmondson, and Leath. The collections at the different services amounted to £41 2s. 0d.

Since the formation of the Society there seems to have been a continual growth in membership, so much so that it was deemed necessary in 1821 to enlarge the Chapel at an estimated cost of £600, but

the actual expenditure amounted to about £1,000. Dr. Adam Clarke re-opened the Chapel on a Friday, and services were continued on the following Sunday conducted by Rev. Thomas Ashton and Rev. Edward Oakes. Notwithstanding the great debt, the seat rents and house rent more than met the interest, and it was thought that when there was added the proceeds of an anniversary sermon, with the probability of an increased letting of seats, the enlargement would be no burden, but would eventually be a source of revenue to the Circuit.

The membership returns for 1825 shew the Kidderminster Society to have 256, contributing £27 12s. 0d. to the Quarter Board. For some few years after this the membership fluctuated considerably. In 1831 there were 208, which three years later had increased to 247; the number in 1836 was 218.

There were eleven Society classes in 1838, these were led by W. Gowen, (who conducted one on Sunday and one on Friday, with 27 members in all) and Messrs. Mark Oliver, W. Kay, Jas. Brown, Bunting, Moreby, Hall, Heritage, Roberts, and Bytheway.

Mr. Oliver was one of the leading members of the Society, and carried on the business of a yarn agent. He was a man of strict integrity and sterling worth. Life was to him a serious thing, and he was never known to spend time in anything approaching frivolity, in fact he was one who, following the Apostle's injunction, "redeemed the time." Not only was he a class leader, but he also filled the office of Society and Circuit Steward and Missionary Secretary. He was active, useful, and very much respected both by ministers and people. He was distinguished for love to God's house, punctuality in all his engagements, and charity to the poor. His house was long the home of the ministers who in

turn took their appointments at Kidderminster, and he always evinced great esteem for them "for their work's sake." He died March 25th, 1849, aged 73, having been a member of the Wesleyan Society fifty-seven years.

Mr. James Brown was a remarkable man, and fine preacher. He was a boot-maker, working chiefly for the well-to-do class of people. He lived for some time in the Bull Ring, and afterwards in the house near the chapel gates. He was a most devoted servant of Christ, and was the means of doing a wonderful amount of good, and most of the young people passed through his class. Though he made himself so useful, and engaged in so much Christian work, he was nearly always in a state of ill-health. After lying upon his couch the greater part of the day he would arise and walk to Stourport, Bewdley, or Cookley, preach a most powerful sermon and then walk back more dead than alive. At one time, in spite of his health, he preached more than a hundred sermons a year in various parts of the Circuit, and the members of his classes comprised nearly half the Society, and it has been thought that no one ever did so much for Methodism in the Stourport Circuit as he. He was of a most lovable disposition, and gained the esteem of all.

Another worthy was John Hall, a postman, noted for his regularity in attending class and prayer meeting; always making it a point to be there. With two exceptions his class had the greatest number of members. Although a poor man he continued for some years to contribute one shilling per week to the Foreign Mission Fund.

For the year 1840 the Society contributed £38 1s. 7½d. to Foreign Missions, the collectors being Misses Morgan and Brown, Mrs. Heritage, and Misses Howarth, Oliver and Humphreys.

In 1838-40 the Rev. Henry Hickman was the Kidderminster Minister, and it was his custom to hold meetings in the Vestry at five in the morning, when he read Finney's Lecture; these meetings closed about ten minutes to six so that the people would have time to reach their work. Among the principal supporters of the cause at this time and for some years subsequent were the Fawcetts, Garlicks Morgans, Keysells, Hammonds and Jenkins'.

At the Christmas quarter of 1846 the members numbered 341, meeting in thirteen classes, this being the greatest number ever reached.

The Rev. John Smart was minister for 1846-7-8. Born at Birmingham 16th Sept., 1815, he had not the advantage of a religious education, but being brought under the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodists, was converted to God. His public ministry was instructive and highly appreciated by intelligent and godly hearers. He died November 12th, 1855, aged thirty nine years.

In 1856 the membership was but 141, considerably less than half that of ten years before. The leaders were Messrs. Charlwood, 22; Lamb, 14; Fawcett, 8; Hall, 28; Rice, 7; Price, 18; Morgan, 14; Pitt, 15; Pitt, 10; Morgan, 5. The local preachers were W. Charlwood, J. Burford, H. W. Rice, W. Hyde, J. Reynolds.

During the Stewardship of Mr. Oliver Giles, and mainly by his efforts, a very desirable alteration was made in the way the ministers were paid. Hitherto, at each quarterly meeting, they had the somewhat humiliating duty of presenting their house bills for the last quarter, containing all the little items incidental to housekeeping. To obviate this, it was resolved that a certain amount should be paid quarterly, and the minister be allowed to spend it as he chose.

During the ministry of Rev. Thomas Crosby, who was a most devoted man of God, and is still remembered for his beautiful life, there was an increase of nearly sixty members. While living in Kidderminster Mr. Crosby lost his wife, who, like her husband, was a faithful servant of Christ. She died 3rd August, 1860, in her 42nd year, and was buried in Mitton Churchyard.

In 1861, the saintly Thomas Owen Keysell, almost worn out in body, came as a Supernumerary to Kidderminster, with the cherished hope that the change would do much to promote his recovery. His desire for the return of health was increased by his strong wish to re-engage in the beloved work of preaching the Gospel. In youth he had been of a light and frivolous nature, but attending with his sister a meeting at the saintly James Brown's house, he heard that which caused him to think seriously, and which led him to change his mode of living, and to embrace the truths of the Gospel. After being for two years upon the plan as a local preacher, he was recommended as a candidate for the ministry. Before leaving for his first circuit he met with Billy Dawson, then on a visit to Kidderminster, who gave him encouragement and advice. His ministry was attended by great spiritual power, and in each circuit in which he laboured many were converted, and added to the Church. The hope of which he had entertained, of renewed health and strength, was not to be realised, for he gradually became worse, and died on 14th April, 1862. When upon his death bed, he failed not to embrace the few opportunities he had of warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. His end was bright and happy; for him death had no terrors, but was the opening of a brighter, holier, and more beautiful existence. He

lies buried in Blakebrook churchyard, in a grave adjoining those of his father and brothers.

The Minister at this time was the Rev. William Allen, who had been a missionary in South Africa, and many were the stories he could tell of his life and work in that country. Especially was he liked in Kidderminster and Stourport Sunday Schools, the children never tiring of listening to his adventures among the heathen.

In 1870 considerable alterations and improvements were made to the chapel, the whole body being re-pewed and an organ erected. Prior to this the singing had been led by stringed and brass instruments, Mr. Bunting being leader of the choir. It was a common saying at one time that "if you want to hear any good singing you must go to the Black Horse chapel."

In 1874 there were eight Society classes, the leaders being Rev. J. Caley, Messrs. Hall, Jones, Lamb, Lancaster, Penthall, Rice, and Miss Dangerfield. The number of members was 107, and the contributions to the Quarter Board were £28.

On the 19th February, 1878, a tea meeting was held in connection with the Mutual Improvement Society, which had been established twenty-eight years before. About 160 persons attended, and at the subsequent meeting, under the chairmanship of Rev. J. W. Jones, addresses were given by Rev. T. Fisk, Rev. G. Hunsworth, M.A., and Messrs. Lamb, Cooper, and Killingbeck. Mr. G. Holdsworth conducted the musical arrangements.

At the March Local Preachers' Meeting, held at Kidderminster, Mr. J. Micklewright was examined as to his knowledge of Christian doctrine. He had been on trial twelve months, and was accepted by

the meeting as a fully accredited local preacher. At the Quarterly Meeting, held on the same day, the Circuit ministers, Revs. C. Povah and J. W. Jones, were cordially invited to remain a second year, and thanks were given to Mr. T. J. Baldwin, one of the Stewards, for the interest he had taken in Circuit matters.

During the ministry of the Rev. G. E. Polkinghorne a substantial increase was made in the number of members, and many will call to mind the fruitful revival services which he delighted to conduct.

As regards Local Preachers, Kidderminster has been particularly blessed with men, some of whom would have brought no discredit to any Methodist pulpit. Beside those already mentioned, there must not be forgotten the Morgans—father and son—whose sermons were ever welcome; also J. Morgan, W. Kay—still remembered as a most lovable and devoted man, whose age alone prevented offering himself for the ministry. Of other worthies who served the Cause and who have gone to rest, mention must be made of W. Charlwood, S. Fawcett, S. Downing, Rocke, Burford, Crowe, Lea, Price and Colwell.

The Sunday School is probably older than the Stourport School, but of its earliest history little is known. The old school at Mount Pleasant was in existence as far back as 1790, when the premises were taken on lease by Mr. James Bell, of the Bull Ring, one of the leading Methodists of that day.

In 1813 the school seems to have been in a very flourishing state, and a collection of £38 was made at what is described as a “charraty” sermon.

The Committee for 1820 consisted of Rev. J. Mortimer, Mr. Russell, S. Jehu, Mr. Garlick, Mr. Walford (Secretary), Mark Oliver, Allbut, James

Howarth, Cox, Carter, Cleeton, Thomas B. Lane, Jenkins, E. Jones 1st, E. Jones 2nd, Brown, Silk.

Two years later the names Smith, Humphreys, Clee, Charlwood, Lamb, Parker, and J. Jones appear. The anniversary collections for that year were £28 4s. 4½d. The Superintendents at this time were Samuel Jehu and T. Humphries, Mr. Garlick was Treasurer, with James Brown and Joseph Hall as Secretaries.

Rev. G. Steward preached the charity sermons in 1833, and in 1835 Billy Dawson paid his first visit, the collection at one service amounting to £22 13s. 10¼d. He came again in 1840 and preached from the words:—"And now also the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The offertories amounted to £30 10s. Mr. Dawson's expenses were 7s. 6d. surely not a large sum. While at his host's Billy was very talkative, much to the annoyance of an old minister present, who gave him a poke saying, "Billy, empty barrels make a big noise," immediately drawing forth the retort "And what's the use of a full one if you don't tap it." Among those who gave financial support to the school about this time were Messrs. Brinton, Talbot senr. and junr., Hammond, Badland, Woodward and Watson.

In 1845 there were 120 boys in the school and 140 girls, with 32 teachers; the annual cost of school being £30. There were now four superintendents for the boys' school, viz., Messrs. Hammond, Thomas and Hall, and two for the girls' school—Mrs. Garlick and Mr. Shem Moreby.

In 1849 the school at Lark Hill was adopted as a branch school, Mr. H. Jones being appointed superintendent with power to appoint teachers.

The following year the writing department of the school was re-established, and Mr. S. Aston was appointed to teach the children writing and arithmetic four nights per week; for this he was allowed 1s. 6d. per week from the school funds.

Mr. John Lamb was at this time appointed Assistant Superintendent, and in the following year he was elected as Superintendent; the Secretary being Mr. E. Cooksey, with Mr. John Thomas as Treasurer.

On March 25th, 1863, in her 71st year, died Mrs. Garlick, who for about twenty-five years had been one of the superintendents of the girls' school. She took a deep interest in Sunday School work, and in the Cause generally. She is remembered as a lover of order, punctuality and decorum; nothing distressing her more than bad behaviour on the part of the scholars, especially when after morning lessons they were taken into chapel for the service, the restless ones receiving a poke from the umbrella she always carried.

In 1865 Penny Readings were commenced for the benefit of the new school-rooms. At the following committee meeting Mr. Thomas Morgan was elected Treasurer to the building fund. The officers for this year were Mr. H. Lea and Mr. Robinson, Superintendents of Boys' School, Mr. Killingbeck and Mr. Lamb for Girls' School; Mr. Rocke was Treasurer, and Messrs. Williams and Wainwright, Secretaries, with the following as members of Committee: J. Hall, T. Turley, W. Jenner, B. Barber, O. Giles, W. H. Broom, J. J. Cooper.

On Easter Monday, 1866, a public tea meeting was held in the Lecture Room, on behalf of the schools. After tea, Rev. J. S. Vickers took the chair, and addresses were delivered by Messrs. Killingbeck,

Lamb, Lea, Hall, Robinson, S. J. Cooper, Giles and Rocke, showing the necessity of new Schools, and other important topics.

The sermons for this year were preached by Rev. J. T. Sangar, of Blackburn, a former minister, and the sum of £18 16s. 3½d. was collected.

The following year the Rev. James Greenland, of Madeley, preached, the collections amounted to £17 5s. 0d.

For some years efforts had been made to procure new premises for School purposes, and on 13th Sept. 1869, the new Schools were opened by a tea meeting. The meeting after was well attended and was addressed by Revs. E. Moulton (Chairman), W. Hart, T. Fisk, J. Marsden, J. Dowty and T. Crosby, and Messrs. Rocke, Lamb and J. Hall. Sermons were preached on the day previous by the Rev. James Greenland, of Brierley Hill. The new Schools were first used for Sabbath instruction on Sept. 26th, 1869, when the morning was devoted to singing and prayer, and in the afternoon Rev. Wesley Hurt gave a very interesting and suitable address to the children.

The sermons for 1870 were preached by Rev. John Hay, of Walsall, the collections were somewhat lower than in former years but this was on account of the re-opening of the Chapel.

Ten years later, the school officers were:—Mr. J. Lamb, Superintendent; Mr. W. Prunell, General Secretary; Mr. Geo. Rocke, Treasurer; Committee: Messrs. Bradshaw, Rice, Pentall, W. Prunell, J. Williams, H. Jordan, C. Steward, C. W. Cotching, J. L. Parsons, Thos. Cruxton, George Holdsworth, D. Mitchell; Messrs. Mayers and Taylor, Auditors; Mr. Parsons, Librarian. The sermons for this year were preached by W. S. Allen, Esq., of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Besides those mentioned many well-known ministers have preached the School Sermons, including Rev. M. Claxton (when £40 were collected), A. G. Jewitt, J. Stanley, C. Janion, Francis Calder, W. Tarr, J. Clapham, and Richard Roberts. Dr. Newton has also visited Kidderminster.

The writer regrets that lack of material prevents justice being done to Kidderminster School, that which has been supplied being of a very scanty description.

PAGE FROM SCHOOL TREASURER'S BOOK.

1811	Dr.		£	s.	d.
To Cash in Hand. March 25th	..	..	9	18	9
„ Collection, June 16th	..	..35	3	6	
„ Base Silver	..	..	0	3	6
			35	0	0
„ Cash from the Classes	..	..	6	4	0
			51	2	9
„ To Balance	..	..	5	18	0
			£57	0	9
1811	Cr.		£	s.	d.
Mar. 25th	Paid B. Barber for Cleaning School	..	13	0	
	„ Books in last year, and to this time	..	4	18	9
	„ For making Road to School	..	12	0	
	„ Mr. Wynn, Repair of Windows	..	7	0	
	„ For Ink to this time	..	2	8	
	„ 100 Quills	..	3	6	
May 30th	„ Printing 80 Hymns	..	3	0	
June 18th	„ Printing do. for Charity Sermon	..	3	10	0
	„ Delivering Hymns	..	2	6	
	„ Mr. Evans, teaching children to sing	..	10	6	
June 21st	„ Mr. Smith, for a desk	..	2	14	0
August 24th	„ 300 Watts's Psalms and Hymns	..	1	16	0
	„ 6 doz. Watts's 1st Catechism	..	18	0	
	„ 4 doz. do. 2nd Catechism	..	1	3	0
Sept. 29th	„ Mr. Wright, Rent for School	..	10	10	0
	„ Box for Books, &c.	..	7	6	
	„ Inkstands	..	7	6	
	„ Quills, Pencils, &c.	..	5	0	
	„ Chandelier	..	6	0	
October 19th,	„ Mr. Bennett, for work in 1810	..	14	11	5
	„ 4 doz. 6d. books	..	1	4	0
	„ Ink	..	2	0	
1812.					
March 25th	„ Paid for Books at Griffin's sale	..	4	13	6
	„ Mr. Bennett for work at school	..	5	12	7
	„ Coals	..	1	2	6
	„ Ink	..	1	4	
			£57	0	9

HIGHLEY.

METHODISM has been established in Highley for considerably more than a century, and till the erection of the Chapel, the services were held in a farm-house called "The Bind," the residence of Mr. William Sheel, who was for many years a local preacher and class-leader, and one of the chief supporters of the cause there. From the introduction of Methodism till 1815, the place appears on the plan as "The Bind." Methodism was first planted there in this wise: A school master had been advertised for, and the situation was obtained by one who followed the teachings of John Wesley. He had not been long in the parish before it was discovered that he was a Methodist, but as no such person had ever been heard of there, no offence was taken, for it was not very clearly understood what Methodism meant. But when Mr. Joseph Steward, who was a man of influence and position there, began to accompany him to cottage meetings, and when several others followed his example, it was felt that some strange thing had happened. Still no one dreamed of schism. Mr. Steward was held in the highest esteem as a churchman; he played the organ which he himself had given to the church, and his son was one of the chief singers.

The clergyman took no cognisance of the cottage meetings, but when tunes picked up at these meetings were introduced into the church the

grievance began. Word was sent to Netherton that no more schismatical tunes were to be sung. To this command the musicians paid no heed.

The details are given in the narrator's own words: "At last, one day when my father was absent, and I was to play the organ, the clerk brought me word that there would be no playing that day. I had got my stops all drawn out, and my music book before me, so, in great indignation, I took up my hat and left the church, and I think I have never entered it since. I did not want to play, not I! but I felt the insult keenly. Oh! they would have liked to have burnt us if they could. The parson did apply to the magistrates to stop us under the Conventicle Act, but he was told it was no longer in force. We were astounded one day at chapel by the attendance of Thomas the clerk. We knew he was a mere sheep, and we could not think what had brought him; then it turned out he was there as a spy, that a proper report might be carried to the magistrates. But the chapel was not built immediately. Indeed, we should never have dreamed of having a chapel at all, if the parson would have let us alone; but he preached so constantly against schism, and as my father was the chief offender (indeed, I think the only one who continued his attendance at church) of course it became unendurable. My blood used to boil at those sermons. We knew them pretty well; they were preached every year without the least variation until schism came into the parish. That made a difference. It was impossible to be prepared for so unheard-of a sin, and new paragraphs were introduced. Many years afterwards, when I sheltered from a heavy rain in the church porch, I was much amused to hear the self-same thing

going on. 'Our forefathers separated from the Church of Rome on good and sufficient grounds, but that is no reason why you should separate from us,' etc., etc.

"The very first sermon I heard *out* of the church was on a week-night; my father took me over to 'The Bind' to hear Mr. Townsend (Rev. John Townsend, appointed to the circuit in 1814). It was before the chapel was built, and the service was held in a neighbour's house. The preacher was a little plump old gentleman, and took for his text, Gal. v. i., 'Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.' A few words of exposition, and then a godly exhortation to hold fast their liberty and not fall into sin. The second preacher was a slow speaker, and I thought him very dry. Then came our chapel opening, just the thing to suit a lad of fourteen—a tent pitched, and a plentiful luncheon provided. Mr. W. preached, but I was not at all impressed; it seemed to me so laboured and methodical. His text was, 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities.' He was minute and pathetic in his tones, but there was not much beyond. Mr. Hopwood followed as our superintendent. He was a very gentlemanly man, and I liked his preaching much. His first text was, 'Therein is our love made perfect,' etc. A very unlikely subject, one would think, to interest a boy; but I thought what a blessed state it must be to live in. He was followed by Stanley, a good preacher, always sensible and shrewd." [This is a mistake, Mr. Stanley preceded Mr. Hopwood.]

In 1797, 'The Bind' (Highley) had a membership of 12, which number had increased to 23 in 1811. Two local preachers resided there, William Sheel and Richard Rushbury. In 1816, the chapel

was built, and is the only one in the circuit to which a graveyard is attached. Eight people are buried therein, and one in the chapel.

On the Plan for 1828 appears the name of George Steward, destined to become one of Methodism's foremost preachers, and a man to whom Dr. Punshon delighted to listen, and author of "Mediatorial Sovereignty." As a youth, he was a zealous adherent of the chapel, but showed no signs of early piety; neither was there much evidence of that wonderful genius which afterwards manifested itself.

On the death of his father, it was found necessary to leave Highley, so he and his mother took a cottage at Kidderminster. He afterwards obtained a situation in London, where he came under the power of the Gospel, and became convinced that his true vocation was that of a Methodist minister. Returning to Kidderminster, he was some short time after proposed and accepted as a Wesleyan preacher. The following is a copy of the letter which he carried with him when leaving home. It was written by Rev. John Bustard and addressed to Rev. James Everitt, Market Street, Manchester.

STOURPORT, *Feb. 23rd, 1829.*

MY DEAR EVERITT,

The bearer (Mr. Steward) is a Local Preacher on our plan; but is going to Manchester at the request of the President, as a supply in the place of Mr. Stinson.

He is an amiable, excellent young man, rather bashful, and therefore more needing and deserving your balmy than your caustic influence. Any favour shewn to him will be as grateful to me as if done to myself.

I hope the Lord is blessing you in body and soul, and circumstances. Myself and partner are in better health at present than we were a few weeks past. I am going to the press this week with the memoir of the dear child I lost eight years ago. I have been afraid to attempt it, and at this remote period have been considerably distressed in narrating some painfully interesting circumstances.

The work will be 18mo, 48 pages full of letter-press, with stiff covers, price 6d. I suppose that it will be proper to allow booksellers 35 per cent., as they will probably find the greater sale from schools which expect 25. I am somewhat inclined to send you some in three or four weeks time.

I think of "impleading the sinner in his own court," and before the world ere long. When shall we have the second part of "Methodism in Sheffield" and the second of "Methodism in Manchester."

I hope you have sold the copies of Miss Ringham which I left with you. If so, or should you before Conference, you may remit to me by one of your preachers who may come to the conference, except you will give me the pleasure of meeting me with other old friends at that interesting place. Mrs. B. unites in kind regards to Mrs. E. and yourself.

Your affectionate Brother, JOHN BUSTARD.

The following letter, bearing the same date was forwarded to Rev. Jabez Bunting, President of the Conference, Methodist Chapel, Salford, Manchester.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I transmitted your letter to Mr. Steward at Kidderminster, immediately on receipt of it. He has this morning left me, and engaged to take coach on Thursday morning, and by a Wolverhampton coach

to reach Manchester in the evening. I rejoice in his being called into the itinerant work, and am much obliged by the special favour shewn to him in his reception into your family. He will, I have no doubt, endeavour to acquit himself with propriety, and to your entire satisfaction. With kind regards to Mrs. B. and your family, I am, Dear Sir, yours respectfully and affectionately,

JOHN BUSTARD.

Thus went forth from the Stourport Circuit one whose ministry brought spiritual blessings to multitudes and to whom many owed their conversion.

In 1833 the membership had risen to 22. From this date, up to 1842, the cause seems to have lost some of its spirituality, and there are some now alive who remember the coldness and indifference which seemed to have taken hold upon the Society; the members appear to have lost somewhat of their first love, and to have sunk nearly to the level of the Laodiceans.

During the ministry of the Revds. William Woolsey, Simeon Noall, and John Saunders, a most gracious revival sprang up. Times of refreshing came from the Lord. The lukewarm became once more earnest; backsliders were reclaimed, and sinners converted to God. The memory of those most gracious and blessed times is still a source of joy to the very few now living. The class-leader at this time was the Mr. William Sheel, before mentioned. He was a North country man, but had taken a farm near to Highley, and for many years he was a great power for good. He had helped Mr. Steward to build the chapel, and was one of the first Trustees. It was no uncommon thing for him in his earlier days to walk to Madeley, a distance of sixteen miles, to attend the class of the saintly Mrs. Fletcher. His house was for many years one of the

homes of the preachers, and occasionally the quarterly meetings were held there.

The kitchen of his house was the scene of more than one conversion, and his heart was always gladdened when God's people assembled there for praise and prayer.

In those days Sunday morning prayer meetings were also held in the chapel at five o'clock; even at that early hour, many walked long distances to begin the day well. It was also the custom on Christmas morning, at the same hour, for the people to commemorate in hymns, prayers, and carols our Saviour's birth. The chapel was none too large for the congregation and the preacher, whether local or ordained, could always depend upon a large and sympathetic gathering.

For the convenience of one who lived in the chapel house, and who was confined to her bed, a window was put in the wall which separated the house from the chapel, so that she, too, could enjoy the services, and many times, when the chapel was full, friends have gone to sit with her, and from there every part of the service could be heard distinctly. That good woman, Mrs. Steward, lies buried in a vault beneath the chapel.

Another well-known and most devoted Christian was Mr. George Lawley, of the Bank Farm, Billingsley. Through the prayers of his sisters, he was led to Christ, and the remainder of his all-too-short life was devoted to the service of Christ his Saviour. In season and out of season, he was employed in the Master's service, and as though some inward monitor had told him his days would be few, he crowded into his life all the acts of love and devotion which the Spirit of God prompted.

How many he pointed to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world will only be known in eternity. Of a somewhat lively disposition he was, before his conversion, the accepted companion of many, but, when that all-important event took place, old habits and company had to be given up; much persecution followed, and many were the jeers and taunts he had to endure. It was at that time the custom of the farmers of the district to assemble on market days at the "Swan" Inn, Bridgnorth, and take dinner there. This also had to be given up, and much had to be endured in consequence. Many were the attempts to persuade him to join the company, but all entreaties were in vain. One day, two of the farmers, more determined than the rest, linked their arms in his, and forcibly dragged him into the room. When there, he told them he was not there of his own free will, but that force had been used. Thinking this a good opportunity of testifying for Christ, he implored them all to give up their sinful habits, lead new lives, and turn to a pardoning Saviour, whom he himself had found. All in the room asked his pardon, and from that time all persecutions ceased; the one who had been the butt of all their sneers and scoffs was now respected and beloved by all.

Many were persuaded that Mr. Lawley should go upon the Plan as a local preacher, but he always said there was quite enough for him to do in his own district, and for him to travel from one place to another would mean, to some extent, the neglect of the place in which he felt his work lay.

He was the means of opening services at a village some two miles from his house, where he converted two cottages into a preaching house, and

for some years High Green, as the place was called, appeared upon the Circuit Plan. Not content with religious teaching, he also taught many to read and write, and no stress of weather or other circumstances, kept him from attending to his well-loved work. His last illness was borne without a murmur, and he displayed a beautiful spirit of submission to the Divine will. When told by his doctor it was impossible for him to recover, he exclaimed "Glory be to God, I shall soon be home." The last few hours were spent in praise, then with the word "Glory" upon his lips, he passed away to be for ever with the Lord. He died 6th January, 1846, aged 28 years. Among the older inhabitants of Highley and district, his memory is still fragrant.

Another earnest and devoted servant was Mr. Matthews, a local preacher, and son-in-law of the Rev. William Homer, then residing at Highley as a supernumerary. There was also Mrs. Norry, the chapel-keeper, still remembered as a Godly and devoted woman.

For some years among the chief supporters of the cause were the Drapers, Wellings, Haines, Gardner, and others; and in later years, the Barkers, Henleys, and many other faithful adherents. Mrs. Barker was for many years a class-leader, and Sunday School superintendent; a devout woman, and one who had feared the Lord from her youth.

Foreign Mission Meetings were for many years held in the chapel, and one of the collectors, Miss Martha Lawley, who still lives, can well relate the story of Highley Methodism in its best and most prosperous days.

In 1846, there were three classes led by Messrs. Matthews, Jones, and Griffin, with a total member-

ship of thirty-six. Ten years later, the number of members had fallen to ten. Since that time many of the older supporters of the cause have been called to their reward; others have left the district, and none have taken their places, and so for some years Methodism there has languished until it is but a shadow of what it has been. The chapel is situated nearly two miles from the village, and people seem not to care to walk the distance their fathers did. In 1878, the Rev. C. Povah, then superintendent minister, saw the need of erecting a chapel nearer the centre of the village; land had been offered and financial help from the same source, but the scheme was never carried into effect.

There have been several attempts to give some amount of life to the cause; tea meetings have been held, entertainments given, and special services conducted, but after a time it has lapsed into deadness. At present Highley Methodism is living upon its past history, a history of which no one need be ashamed. There is still need for all God's people can do. The population is greater now than it has ever been; more houses have been built; and, in consequence of the opening of fresh coalpits, many more are to be erected. With renewed and continued effort on the part of God's people, and under His smile and benediction there is no reason why His cause should not again shine with its former brightness.

BEWDLEY.

THE exact date of the introduction of Methodism into Bewdley is not known, but it is believed a Society existed as far back as 1769; so that when Wesley paid his first visit five years later, he found a few God-fearing people there to welcome him. On Monday, August 1st, 1774, when he first came, he travelled from Broseley in Shropshire. While there he heard the particulars of a somewhat remarkable story. He says, "Some time since, one of the colliers here, coming home at night, dropped into a coal-pit twenty-four yards deep. He called aloud for help, but none heard all that night and all the following day. The second night, being weak and faint, he fell asleep and dreamed that his wife, who had been sometime dead, came to him and greatly comforted him. In the morning, a party of gentlemen were out hunting, when a hare started up just before the hounds, ran straight to the edge of the pit and was gone, no man could tell how. The hunters searched all round the pit, when they were startled to hear a voice from the bottom. They quickly procured proper help, and drew the man up unhurt."

Describing this first visit, he says, "August 1st, I preached at Bewdley in an open place at the head of the town, and in the evening at Worcester, which still continues one of the liveliest places in England. Here I talked with some who believe God has lately delivered them from the root of sin. Their account

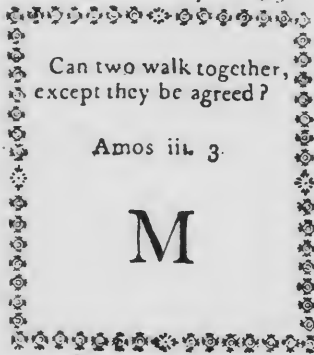
was simple, clear, and scriptural, so that I saw no reason to doubt their testimony." Four years after this another visit was paid. He says, "After visiting Stroud, Gloucester and Tewkesbury, on Wednesday, 18th, I went over to Bewdley and preached about noon at the upper end of the town to most of the inhabitants of it." Twelve months after this he came again, and recording that visit, he says, "At noon I preached in Bewdley in an open space at the head of the town to a very numerous and quiet congregation. She, Mrs. C—, informed me, 'This day twelve months I found peace with God; and the same day my son, till then utterly thoughtless, was convinced of sin. Some time after he died, rejoicing in God and praising Him with his latest breath.'"

On Thursday, March 16th, 1780, another visit was paid. "About noon I began preaching at Bewdley in an open space at the head of the town. The wind was high and exceeding sharp, but no one seemed to regard it. In the middle of the sermon came a man beating a drum, but a gentleman of the town soon silenced him. He came again the following year, so that it will be seen that the town had been visited four years in succession; and it was not till Thursday, Mar. 16th, 1786, that his sixth and last visit was paid. Upon that occasion he says, "It was not without some difficulty that we made our way through the snow (from Worcester) to Bewdley. Prejudice is here now vanished away. The life of Mr. Clark turned the tide, and much more, his glorious death. I preached about noon."

Myles, in his "Chronological History of the People called Methodists," says that a Chapel was built at Bewdley in 1785, but it appears strange that Mr. Wesley should have made no mention of it when he paid his last visit. If

this date is correct, this place was one of the first built in Worcestershire, the others being Dudley, 1764, and Worcester, 1772. Prior to the erection of the Chapel the Society met, it is believed, in a house situated in Park Lane. Bewdley was at this time with Stourport, in the Worcester Circuit, though when the Society was first formed it appears to have been in the Staffordshire Circuit.

Sept. 1791.



Ann Garbett

In 1791 Ann Garbett was admitted on trial as a member of the Methodist Society. A little later she became Ann Owens, grandmother of Mr. T. Owens, J.P., who possesses her trial ticket. Her husband, Mr. B. Owens, sen., was a very useful and devoted Local Preacher, and on his business travels it was his custom to preach whenever he had the opportunity. When visiting Ludlow, he would send the crier round announcing time and place of preaching. He also held services in a cottage on Wyre Hill. The Sheriff, who must have been somewhat bigoted, determined to put a stop to "those noisy Methodists" and instructed a constable to keep his eye on Mr. Owens, and as soon as service commenced, to march in and arrest him. The time came, the house was full, and the door shut; the constable waiting outside. Mr. Owens, seeing him through the window, and guessing his purpose, changed the hymn with which he had intended to commence, and gave out

" Shall I, for fear of mortal man,
The Spirit's course in me restrain ?
Or undismayed, in deed or word,
Be a true witness for my Lord ? "

The constable made no attempt to enter, but listened throughout the service, then told the Sheriff he could not arrest Mr. Owens for he believed him to be a good man, and that he himself had obtained good by listening outside.

In 1794, the present Chapel was built, the opening services being conducted by Dr. Coke. When the Stourport Circuit was formed, Bewdley was the third place upon the Plan, the membership at that time being 78, two more than the Society at Stourport. Mr. James Lewis, who lived near the Church, was at this time one of the leading Methodists, and it was at his house the minister stayed when he visited Bewdley, in the Circuit round. At this time Bewdley paid £2 15s. 6d. per quarter towards the preacher's board, and £1 per quarter towards his house rent at Stourport. A Mr. Bennett was also a very useful officer connected with the cause in those early days; he seems to have been a man of substance and position. Other supporters at this time were the Hardings, Wallaxhalls, Hammonds, Pipers, Listers, and Marshalls.

The Chapel was at this time lighted by candles, these being attended to by William Boucher, who received 2s. 6d. per year for his trouble. Connected with the cause was a good woman who made herself generally useful; she appears to have been one of those persons no meeting-place seems complete without; possibly it may have been Susan Kendall, who in those far-off days cleaned the Chapel, but, whoever it was, when the candles wanted attending to, she would call out during any part of the service, "Now, Billy, snuff them candles." Billy died in 1822.

In 1811, there were five classes, led by Martha Marshall (who conducted two) James Jones, Thomas Bennett, and Mary Harding, the total membership

being 74. Two Local Preachers also lived in the town. For this year there was collected for the Kingswood School, £1 15s. 0d; Yearly Collection, £2 16s. 6d; Preachers' Fund, £1 19s. 6d; and Collection ordered by Conference, £1 10s. 0d.

Two years after this the membership and the collections went up a little, with a further rise in 1816, while soon after there were four Local Preachers residing at Bewdley. In 1824, the Chapel was closed for a time to permit of cleaning and renovation, service being held in the Presbyterian and Baptist Chapels. The re-opening services were conducted by the Rev. Jacob Stanley, then on a visit to his relations at Stourport. Lamps were now used for lighting purposes, these being attended to by Mr. Tolley, Chapel-keeper.

The subscribers to the Auxiliary Fund for 1830 were Mr. Burlton, Mr. Doughton, Mr. Harmer, Mr. Piper, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Clarke, and the Messrs. Owens. In the early days, the Local Preachers appointed at Bewdley took their meals at the house of Mr. C. Hammond, himself a local brother, for which he was paid the sum of 5s. per quarter, the appointment averaging five Sundays for the quarter. The pew rents, which at this time amounted to about £8 10s. 0d. per quarter, were collected by Mr. Hall, he receiving £1 per year for his trouble. One of the principal supporters of the cause at this date, and for many years after, was Mr. Thomas Brookes, an independent gentleman living in the Lower Park. He was a thorough Christian, taking the deepest interest in the work and contributing most liberally to the various funds, and to anything in connection with Christ's Church. He was for many years a Class-leader, having the largest class in the Society. He was in great

request as chairman at Foreign Missionary meetings, at the close of which, when a vote of thanks was proposed to him for his services, with hands outstretched as if in the attitude of blessing, would invariably exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name be all the glory." He was also a Local Preacher for many years. He continued as long as possible to attend the Chapel he loved so well, neither age nor infirmity preventing him. The first Plan for 1830 shows the name of John Nicholls on trial as a Local Preacher. He was a man bound up in Bewdley Methodism, making the most of his time and using up every opportunity of doing good. Perhaps no man was better acquainted with the Society than he, and throughout an exceedingly long life he worthily espoused the cause of God. He made himself useful in every way possible and filled nearly, if not all, the offices which a layman in Methodism is permitted to hold. As Class-leader, Circuit and Society Steward, leader of the choir for about fifty years, he was a pattern of industry. Not only was he ready with his voice to advocate the claims of religion, but, as his means allowed, he contributed to the cause of the Church of Christ. Not only did he serve the Church, but the town generally, being several times elected Mayor, and was also a Justice of the Peace. In extreme old age, his venerable figure, stooping beneath the burden of years, could be seen wending its way to the House of God which he had known and loved for more years than most men live. He died in his 93rd year.

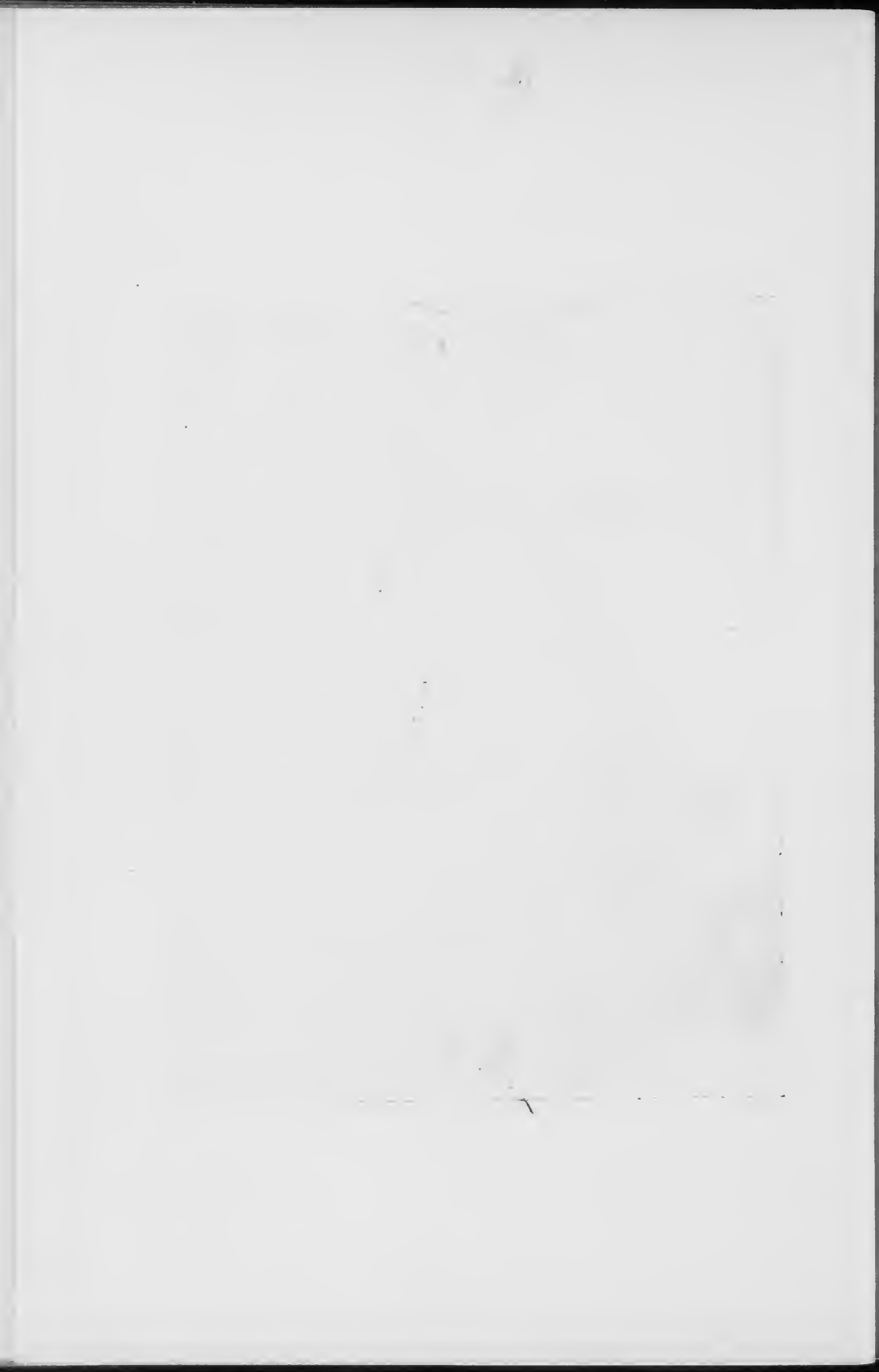
Another name well-known in the Circuit, and which first appears upon the Plan of 1831, is that of Benjamin Owens, son of Benjamin Owens, who has already been referred to. He was a devoted servant in the Master's service, travelling many

miles to preach the Gospel. His memory is still fragrant among the older members of the Society. As a Class-leader and Circuit Steward he also served the Church.

On the Plan for 1836-7 is the initial letter "B," which stands for William Butler, for many years a shining light in the Society. Of his earliest days but little is known, but his subsequent life proved him to be a sincere and devout Christian; and up to his death, which occurred on 5th November, 1884, in his 83rd year, he led a blameless life. He was more than an ordinary man, full of wit and well read for one in his position. Such was his knowledge of things in general, that on one occasion when in conversation with Mr. Owens, Mr. Sheel, of Highley, exclaimed "Mr. Owens, that Butler of thine has all the learning of Sir Isaac Newton." While engaged with his work at one of the mills at Stourport, he had the misfortune to meet with an accident, which necessitated the amputation of one hand. This he afterwards referred to as the happiest day of his life. For many years he travelled the district selling tea, and very few were the children who failed to get a supply of sweets which he always carried with him. He at one time sold Bibles, making a special point of visiting public-houses for that purpose. He also gave some hundreds of them away during his lifetime. He was a great letter-writer, all couched in a religious tone; a number of these he would keep on hand, ready to despatch when opportunity arose, to those who needed counsel and Christian sympathy. He was a constant and punctual attendant at the means of grace; and at the Prayer Meeting he would start to the minute, though no other may have been present. After singing and praying, if none had arrived, he would pronounce the benediction, and



WESLEYAN CHURCH, BEWDLEY.



go home. He had a great objection to long prayers, and when he thought some of the long-winded brethren had been on sufficiently long, he would rise from his knees and go outside till the good brother had finished. He always opened the Sunday morning Prayer Meeting with Hymn 494 :—

“ Lo ! God is here ; let us adore
And own how dreadful is this place ;
Let all within us feel His power,
And silent bow before His face ”

As a Class-leader he was most diligent, making a point of seeing his members every week. In giving, he was most liberal, often giving away that which he himself needed, and none went from his door unhelped. He was of a forgiving disposition, and never engendered ill-feeling towards anyone.

In 1841 there were seven classes, conducted by J. Farmer, J. Lister, J. Nicholls, W. Hall, T. Crowe and T. Brookes, who had charge of two.

Mr. Farmer was a saddler, and carried on business at the top of Load Street. When he died, Mr. Nicholls, who had married Mr. Farmer's daughter, carried on the business. It could be always seen when Mr. Farmer was enjoying the sermon, for with eyes wide open, he would pay the greatest attention to the remarks of the preacher, but, if the discourse happened to be somewhat dry, then his eyes were closed.

Mr. Crowe, who at this time had the largest class, numbering 23, kept a private school in High Street. He was a very zealous and Godfearing man.

The contributors to the Foreign Mission Fund for 1845 were Mr. T. Brookes, Mrs. Doughton and Mrs. Wheeler. The collectors being Mrs. Nicholls, Mrs. and Miss Puckey. The total collections for that year being £30 3s. 8d. Two years later the

collections amounted to £47 5s. 5d. In 1850 extensions and alterations were made to the Chapel, to the extent of £300. The subscriptions for this purpose ranged from £1 to £100. Among the chief subscribers were T. Brookes, Mrs. Burlton, the Owens' family, Farringtons, Sir Francis Winnington, General Lygon, M.P., Messrs. Piper, Baker, Bury, Marcy, Wright, Skey, Crowe, and many others.

About this time, Mr. Rowley, Postmaster, was leader of the choir, which consisted of nearly twenty voices. Several musical instruments were also used. Mr. James Bevan played a violin, Mr. Farrington a flute, Mr. David Green a cornet, Mr. R. Owens a violoncello. On special occasions the choir was reinforced by friends from Kidderminster and Cookley. Messrs. Bunting and S. Taylor being prominent among the former, and Messrs. Walford and Yearsley among the latter. Mr. Owens entertained these friends when they came over to assist. During the last year of Mr. Nicholls' leadership a harmonium was purchased, the first to preside at the instrument being Miss Piper, of High Street. This lady continued to fill this position till about the year 1888, when she resigned, and Miss Letitia Roberts was elected to the vacant post.

In 1865 the class-leaders were Mr. Butler, Mr. Crowe, Mr. Farmer, Mr. B. Owens, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls. The membership had gone down considerably, there being at this time 66 meeting in society. In 1868 Rev. G. B. Macdonald, one of Methodism's foremost ministers, and grandfather of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, came to live at Bewdley as a Supernumerary, taking up his residence in the Lower Park. His powers as a preacher were of a superior order, and his services in the pulpit and on the platform were held in great request, and he freely responded to the

calls made upon him. His closing years were spent in physical weakness, but he endured his affliction with complete resignation to the will of God. He died in great peace, and lies buried in Ribbesford Churchyard.

The Rev. John Saunders also resided at Bewdley as a Supernumerary. He had travelled in the circuit with Rev. Simeon Noall, 1843-4, and with Mr. Clough in 1845. The intervening years between 1870 and 1890 seem to have been spent in quiet but persistent work. In the latter year an effort was made to renovate the Chapel, and to clear off a long-standing debt; Mr. Thomas Owens, J.P. promising fifty guineas if the scheme was carried out at once. All the friends entered heart and soul into the scheme, with the result that it was entirely carried out, and the premises cleared of the debt which had so long existed upon them. Not satisfied with the accomplishment of this noble effort, an organ was purchased to take the place of the harmonium, which had been so long in use. Miss L. Roberts was the first to preside at this instrument, a position she still occupies, Mr. George Phillips continuing leader of the choir, a post he had held since the resignation of Mr. Nicholls some years ago.

In the early part of the present year a meeting in connection with the Twentieth Century Fund was held in the Chapel, presided over by Mr. J. W. Powell, junior Circuit Steward, and addressed by Rev. J. A. Smart, of Birmingham, and others, the friends promising to do their best to help forward this noble scheme.

The Sunday School, like the sister Schools of Stourport and Kidderminster, was very early established, but of its infancy little, if anything, is known. In 1822 Mr. John Lister was Superintendent, Mr. C.

Hammond Treasurer, and Mr. B. Owens, junior, Secretary; those gentlemen with Mr. W. Price, Mr. C. Lister, Mr. B. Owens, senr., Misses Piper, Crump, and Reynolds, forming the committee. Prior to the erection of the present school, lessons were given in one of the warehouses belonging to Mr. Owens.

In 1822 Rev. John Bicknell, of Birmingham, was invited to preach the annual sermons. The following year a night school was commenced in connexion with the Sunday School, for instructing the scholars in writing. At this time rewards were given to those scholars who could best repeat Watts' Catechism. These rewards were generally Bibles. It was also the custom, as at other schools, to give the boys hats, the girls receiving bonnets and "tipates," they being procured in the "best and cheapest markets." A resolution passed at a committee meeting held March 25th, 1826, "that new strings be purchased for the bonnets of the singers," seems to suggest that these bonnets were preserved from year to year for anniversary purposes. Buns were also distributed to the children on Good Friday.

The good friends of that day, not content with the School at Bewdley, proposed at one of their meetings that a Sunday School should be started at Pound Green, to be considered a branch of the School at Bewdley. This was done, and for many years was attended to by teachers from Bewdley. The founders of this School were Messrs. Cornelius Lister and B. Owens, jun. The children of the Bewdley School were allowed to bring one halfpenny for each attendance; at the close of the year the amount was doubled from the school funds.

The school officers for 1845 were: John Lister, President; T. Owens, Treasurer; and John Nicholls,

Secretary. These, with the following, formed the Committee, Messrs. T. Brookes, B. Owens, J. Lewis, C. Lister, Jacob Lister, A. Farrington, W. Williams, Mrs. Knight, Miss Ann Owens, and Miss S. Piper.

In 1863, the School took part in the general rejoicing occasioned by the marriage of the Prince of Wales. Medals and flags were purchased, refreshments provided, and each child received 6d.

Among those who have been invited to preach the anniversary sermons are the Revs. J. Watson, S. Sugden, P. C. Turner, Johnson, and Pickering. Dr. Melson was a great favourite at Bewdley, coming no less than thirteen times, the last being in 1886. Among the friends of the Sunday School must be mentioned Mrs. Burlton, an independent lady who took great interest in all departments of the work, and for some years she took upon herself all the necessary preparation for the children's anniversary. She was kind and generous, especially so in entertaining the ministers.

The late Mr. Thomas Owens took a great interest in the School, having been Treasurer for very many years. From early life he was associated with it in some way or other. He also served the Church in other ways, and for twelve years acted as Circuit Steward. He was a good man and loved the Methodist Church. Mr. and Mrs. Parrott (now of Cheltenham), took deep interest in the School, being for some years upon the Management Committee. Mr. Parrott was a Class-leader and Local Preacher.

Mention must also be made of Mr. G. Turner, and Mr. J. R. Jones, for many years devoted Local Preachers, serving the Church they loved with fidelity and devotion.

MAY GOD BLESS BEWDLEY WESLEYAN METHODIST
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

COOKLEY.

THERE appears to be no record of Cookley Methodism prior to 1812, when there was a Society of eight; but there can be but little doubt of that place having been visited still earlier in the century. In what place that little Society held their services cannot now be determined, but in 1814 a piece of land was purchased, and a small chapel erected thereon. For the December quarter of 1812 the members sent 10s. 9d. to the Quarter Board. In 1816 the membership had gone up to thirty; the collections for that year amounting to £1 6s. 9d. for Schools, £1 11s. 0d. for Missions, 17s. 2d. extra for Conference and £1 4s. for Broadway chapel. The next three years shew a decrease in members and in amount of collections; but in 1820 the returns show an increase of 58 on the year, and a total of 78, this being eight more than Bewdley, and only nineteen less than Stourport. This was the highest number recorded in the Society. For some years there was a gradual decrease, there being but 13 members in 1830; in 1833 the number had risen to 20, in 1840 to 34, and a further increase of five in the following year.

There were two Classes at this time, one led by the Rev. Edward Usher and the other by Henry Bozwell. Mr. Bozwell was a man of sterling worth, and a splendid specimen of what a Methodist should be. True to his convictions, and unfailing in Christian duty, he was a great help to the Cause of Christ in the village.

He was extremely fond of his Class, and looked after the highest and best interests of each member. He would suffer no one to scoff or sneer at any of those of whom he had the spiritual oversight, and woe betide any man who tried to draw away those who were endeavouring to walk in the paths of righteousness. If ever he heard of anything of the kind he would find out the offender, and, trusting to no words of his own, would repeat—with all the power and meaning possible—our Saviour's words: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

About this time Cookley did well for Foreign Missions, subscriptions and collections amounting in some years to more than £20. The collectors for many years were Mrs. Boswell, Mrs. Kay and Misses Piper and Crannage.

In 1848 there were three Classes, led by H. Boswell, — Thomas, and — Wilkins, with a membership of 56. Three years later there were four classes, the leaders being Messrs. Cox, Palmer, Cranage and Felvus.

In 1854 Thomas Yearsley was appointed a Class leader. He was a rare specimen of what Methodism has been called, viz., "Christianity in earnest." A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and yet an illiterate man. Born of poor parents, and left an orphan when young, he had no facilities for education in early life, and never attained to anything in literature beyond being able to read in his Bible just sufficiently to edify himself. Although he was a Class leader for many years, and had the largest Class in the Society, he never

gave out the verse of a hymn or read a word in any way. One of his members was appointed to keep his book, and the hymns were announced by others.

His account of his conversion, which he gave with much warmth in the Lovefeasts, was very remarkable and soul-stirring, and never failed to help some of the younger members.

He was for a long time leader of a band, in which capacity he was held in high esteem by his employers, the proprietors of the Cookley Iron-works. These gentlemen took great interest in the band, and spared no expense to make it proficient; the result being that it became the pride of the neighbourhood, and its leader an important personage.

Having by some means been convinced of his sins, he felt that the band must be given up. It was a terrible trial, for his heart was in it, and moreover in giving up the leadership he ran the risk of offending his employers and losing his situation, no small matter to him as a working man with a rising family. There was, however, no peace for him so long as he held the position, so he determined at all hazards to relinquish the post. He was assailed on all hands, and had an exceedingly fiery ordeal to pass through, appeals, remonstrances and threats being brought to bear upon him; but by the grace of God he was proof against it all, and when once the spell was broken, and the idol sacrificed, the joy of soul which he realized more than compensated for all the suffering. Although he severed his connection with the band, his musical talent did not remain idle, as he led the chapel choir for many years. He lived on, toiled, and in his toil rejoiced, until at a ripe old age he triumphantly passed to his reward.

For some years the Sunday School had been held in a room at the Ironworks, where, in addition to sacred teaching, reading and writing were also taught—this being all the learning many had.

The Superintendents about that time were John Walford, George Newell and George Crannage, and for teachers there were John Southall, W. Avers, W. Guest, W. Thomas, D. Nurse, and others.

In 1863 a piece of land was purchased, and in the following year a school was erected thereon, the stone being laid by T. J. Baldwin, Esq., of Stourport.

In 1874 the Class leaders were Messrs. Bloomer and Griffiths, the membership being 22. The year 1878 showed an increase over the two preceding years.

In the same year the School Anniversary sermons were preached by Mr. D. Barr, of Birmingham. Although the rain came down abundantly in the morning a cheerful number reached the House of God, and in the evening it was well crowded. The collections were £10 5s. 4½d.

On Dec. 15th, 1878, after a few days' illness, died Mr. G. Newell, aged 63, one of the Trustees of the Chapel. Also on the 26th, aged 26, Mr. William Bloomer. He had been a member above nine years, and was a Sunday School teacher. He died, as he had lived, in Christ.

Cookley Chapel has several times been enlarged, the last time in 1874.

Upon the division of the Circuit in 1885, Cookley was transferred from Stourport to the newly-formed Circuit of Kidderminster.

FOREST.

METHODISM at Forest was established nearly one hundred and twenty years ago. Of its early history very little is known, and no documents are forthcoming to throw any light upon the subject. The situation of Forest and the fact of its being a long way from the Parish Church, would, perhaps, account for so early an establishment of a Society there. Being situated upon the main highway, it would be an easy matter for the early Methodist Preachers, travelling from one place to another, to stay there for awhile and so lay the foundations of the Society which is still a great power in the district.

The first Chapel was built in 1794, and was situated some distance back in the wood. At the time of its erection there were but about five other Chapels in Worcestershire. It was a very small building, but probably met the needs of the Society. When the Stourport Circuit was formed, Forest stood fifth upon the Plan, and there was then a membership of twenty-two. In 1811, the number had fallen to eighteen.

Besides giving to the ordinary collection, the Society contributed to the Kingswood school 6s. 1½d., to the yearly collection, 6s. 6d., and 3s. to the extra collection ordered by the Conference. There was at that time one Local Preacher residing at Forest. The members for the same year were:—Benjamin Davis, leader, Mary Davis, Jonathan Ankrett,

Elizabeth Ankrett, Edward Monk, Sarah Monk, John Roberts, Lucy Roberts, Edward Rea, Susan Rea, Thomas Davis, Sarah Worrall, Jane Nounicutt, Thomas Hinslow, Ann Parry, Edward Blunt, Ann Blunt, John Roberts, sen. For a number of years the cause appears to somewhat have gone down, for the membership returns show a series of ups and downs, sometimes sinking so low as four; in 1836 there were 20 members. In 1864 a new Chapel was built, near the road and more commodious; the old Chapel being sold to Mr. James Tait for £10. In 1885 Forest was separated from the Stourport Circuit.

FRITH COMMON.

METHODIST services were commenced at this place, which is a hamlet in the parish of Lindridge, near Tenbury, very early in the century. The services were for a time held in a cottage or farmhouse, as at that time there were but few chapels in the County. In whose house the meetings were held cannot now, so many years later, be determined; but most probably the Aston family, who were among the early Methodists there, lent their kitchen for the purpose. There are no records to shew the number of members when the Society was formed, but very soon it was found necessary to build. A piece of ground having been given, a chapel was erected thereon in 1810 or 1811, and the opening services were conducted by the Rev. Theophilus Lessey, the second minister. There is an entry in Society Steward's Book of 6s. for hire of Mr. Lessey's horse on this occasion.

The chapel is an exceedingly plain structure, presenting to the road side a blank wall which gives it more the appearance of a barn than a place of worship, but inside it is light and comfortable.

At the time of its erection there was a Society of twenty-three members, two of them being Local Preachers. This Society was divided into two classes, John Farmer being the leader of one, and probably both. The members at that time were Thomas Cadman, Samuel Aston, James Blunt, Mary

Blunt, Thomas Farmer, Richard Farmer, Thomas Nash, James Wall, Susan Farmer, Ellen Farmer, George Fosbrooke, Thomas Aston, in one class. The other class consisted of Mary Wall, Henry Knott, William Drinkwater, Elizabeth Blunt, Benjamin Banks, Mary Banks, Elizabeth Davies, Mary Aston, Mary Farmer, Jane Yapp. The contribution to the Quarter Board was £1.10s.

The following year Samuel Aston was appointed leader of the second class. There was an increase of one upon each of the following two years, and beside class money there was collected, for School 14s. 3d., Conference 12s., Missionary 13s. 6d., and Yearly Collection 11s. 8d.

In 1827 the membership had risen to 27. This number has never been exceeded. In subsequent years the membership appears to have fluctuated very much, the returns sometimes presenting the appearance of a revival having taken place, and at others that of lethargy and want of spiritual life. From the earliest the Astons have been among the chief supporters of the Cause, contributing very largely to the musical part of the services. Miss Aston and Mr. William Aston were for some years the collectors for the Foreign Missions. Edward Aston and Thomas Cadman were for years the leaders of the classes. In 1885 Frith became part of the newly formed Kidderminster Circuit.

WILDEN.

ABOUT the year 1825 services were first held at Wilden, but these could not have been of an encouraging character, as no Society appears to have been formed there, and the place disappeared from the Plan two years later. It was again put upon the Plan in 1830, service commencing at 2.30 ; and for four years the services were continued. The place was then again given up. Seven years afterwards, another trial was made and an alteration made in the time of service, 6 p.m. then being the time for commencing. For sixteen years services were held, and then again discontinued. A few years later it again appears, jointly with Hoobrook, service commencing at the latter place at half-past two, the same preacher taking both appointments. In 1865, the services were discontinued, but eight years later Wilden again appears upon the Plan, but was, about two years later, again left off, and since that time no Methodist services have been held there.

There seems to have been no Society Class established there at all, without the class conducted by Mr. Isaac Summerhill, who lived at Wilden, and which came under the Stourport returns of membership, constituted the Society there.

Mr. Summerhill was not only a Class-leader, but a Local Preacher also, being appointed in 1815. He was a man of Godly character and a pattern to many. His removal from the earthly sphere of

labour was sudden and unexpected. He had been to take an appointment at one of the country places of the Circuit, and had preached with much energy. Upon returning home he was seized with an illness which, in about a fortnight, terminated in death. Some of his last words were "Glory, glory, glory," and shortly after his spirit calmly and peacefully entered into rest.

ABBERLEY.

PRIOR to the erection of the Chapel here, services were held in the house of Mr. Henry Dudley, and for many years the place appeared upon the Plan as "The Elms." In 1825, there was a membership of 13. The work there for some years after seems to have been of a stationary character, for in 1837 the return of membership is the same. Service commenced here at half-past two. The preacher would then walk to Kingswood, near Great Witley, to conduct evening service, which began at 6 o'clock. The members at this place then numbered ten, the Class-leader being Mr. Benjamin Taylor.

In 1857, Abberley Chapel was erected. Services were then discontinued at the Elms and Kingswood, those who formed the congregations at those places joining in worship at the newly-erected Chapel. The Rev. Francis J. Sharr, second minister of the Worcester Circuit, opened the building as a place of worship. Public meetings were held and general rejoicing was manifest. For many years the cause of God in this place abundantly prospered; there was a Society Class of thirty-two, and the Chapel was not large enough to contain the people, some of them having to sit on the pulpit stairs, while many could not get in at all. Many of the chief supporters at this time were fairly well-to-do people, who took a constant interest in the place. Among these must be mentioned the Dudleys, Edwards', Jacksons, Jones's, Astons, and Molseids.

The Foreign Missionary meetings here were always seasons of great interest, and the collections made were not the least in the Circuit. At these meetings the late Mr. T. J. Baldwin usually took the chair, Abberley being a place in which he took an especial interest. Among the collectors there was Miss Kate Dudley, who generally managed to gather a fair sum for the mission cause.

On one occasion during Divine service, a man in a half-drunken condition rose from his seat, and, addressing the preacher, said "And if you please, sir, where did you get your information from?" This so upset the preacher that, though he bore the title of Reverend, he collapsed in the middle of his sermon and had to abruptly close the service. Strange to say, a grandson of the same individual, in the same half-tipsy state, at a service a few years ago, politely informed the preacher in an audible tone that he was making mistakes in his remarks.

After a while a decline set in; some of the old pillars were taken to their reward, others moved to different places. The congregations were sadly thinned, and for some years the old fire and warmth seemed almost to go out. Opposition to the cause was not wanting in some quarters, and everything seems to have been done to shut up the place, and so low had the work become that about twelve years ago it was deemed advisable to close the Chapel. For about two or three years no services were held, then it was taken over by the Worcester and Hereford Mission, and services recommenced, but there appears to have been no stability about the work, and the Abberley people were afraid to go to the services, the congregation consisting of those who came from other parishes. The work showed no prosperity, and again the

Chapel was closed for a time, services being revived soon after, and have not since been discontinued. Two years ago Abberley was taken up again by the Stourport Circuit. The congregations are not large, and at times there does not seem much to encourage, but there is room for all we can do. The few who attend appear to be devout and serious, and to enjoy the services. With faith, prayer, constant attendance to appointments, and quiet perseverance, there is no reason why the cause should not again revive.

CLEOBURY MORTIMER.

METHODISM was introduced into Cleobury Mortimer about one hundred and fifteen years ago, and in 1790 a chapel was erected. It was at that time in the Worcester Circuit, but in 1797 was made part of the Stourport Circuit, it then having a membership of twelve. In 1811 there were but six members, but in 1817 there were again the original number. For some few years the Cause in Cleobury seemed to be in a state of fluctuation. There seems to have been no well-to-do people connected with Methodism there, and after awhile the Cause seemed so to languish that in 1824 the Trustees gave notice to the Conference that the chapel must be sold "Because there was not, neither was there likely to be, a Society who could give any assistance towards the needed repairs." The building had become dangerous from the general failure of the roof, and it was requisite either to sell the premises to pay the debt upon them, and decline all further efforts for the spiritual welfare of the people, or to expend about £90 in repairing the humble house of God. A local preacher, who had laboured there upwards of thirty years, offered to give £5 rather than the place should be abandoned. The work was taken in hand, and the chapel was re-opened for Divine worship on Sunday, October 7th, 1827, by the Rev. Jas. Heaton. The services were held in the afternoon and evening, the chapel overflowed with deeply attentive hearers,

and the contributions amounted to more than £48. A spirit of hearing was gradually awakened, the number in Society trebled, and the place became generally well attended. For some years after this the membership appears to have remained almost stationary till a gradual decline set in, and Cleobury disappeared from the Plan in 1860. About ten years ago Methodism was again introduced there, the place being worked by the Worcester and Hereford Mission. Cleobury is now in the Kidderminster Circuit.

BEVENY WOOD AND OVERWOOD.

BEVENY Wood and Overwood for some years appear as preaching places upon the Stourport plan. At neither of these places was a Chapel erected, nor does the society seem to have assumed very great dimensions.


So far back as 1797 the Society at Beveny consisted of ten members, which, in 1813 had increased to 17, the leader of the class being Mr. Thomas Morris, jun. This Society contributed that year, to the Kingswood School collection, 3s. 8d., Yearly Collection, 4s. 5d.; Missionary, 5s.; and 4s. 4d. for Frith Common Chapel.

In 1833 there were but seven members, and from that date the Society seems to have made no progress. In 1849 Beveny Wood was dropped from the plan. The services at Overwood were carried on for some years later, and probably the few friends of Beveny cast in their lot with the Overwood Society. About 1860 this place was also given up.

Services were for many years conducted on Areley Common, and the building which was used as a Methodist Chapel at Astley Cross still stands, having been converted into cottages. Astley Burff, Little Witley, Shelsley, Shrawley, Hartlebury Common, and Mitre Oak, have appeared on the plan as preaching places; and at Lark Hill and Love Lane, Kidderminster, and Franche, have Methodist services been conducted. Many years ago services were held at Cutnall Green, Acton, Lineholt, and Clowstop, but at none of these places does there appear to have been a very strong Society. Prior to 1826 Hampton Loade appeared on the plan as a preaching place; but upon the removal of the iron-works in that year, the services were given up.

Services were also held in the house of Mr. John Walford at Button Oak. Upper Areley and Pound Green were at one time preaching places, but were given up many years ago.

WILLIAM HAYWOOD.

 HIS extraordinary and remarkable man was born at West Bromwich, February 4th, 1795. From early childhood William Haywood was the subject of religious impressions of more than ordinary depth and force. His mind was of so serious and devout a cast that he could take no part even in the games of his schoolmates—appearing as they did to him as so much time lost. On one occasion he had so vivid a perception of his own sinful nature that he retired to his father's hay-loft, where he was afterwards found by his mother, who had been searching for him, so earnestly engaged in prayer that she fell upon her knees beside him. But harm was done him at this time by the injudicious flattery of friends, among whom were ministers, who constantly told him that he was “an excellent, good, and quiet boy,” when he felt himself far otherwise.

For several years after this nothing remarkable appears to have happened to him. Leaving West Bromwich he came to Stourport, and found employment at the firm of Baldwin, Son & Co., with whom he remained the rest of his life. Such became the earnestness of his desire to obtain salvation that he would retire to some quiet spot and plead with God for the blessing of pardon. After some time the words were applied to his mind “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Then began that unceasing activity which characterised his future life. In those days he made the most of the Sabbath, attending the six o'clock morning prayer meeting, then to Sunday school and morning service. After dinner he would attend afternoon service, then evening service, followed by prayer meeting.

In 1828 his name appears upon the Plan as a Local Preacher on trial, but it only appears for eight months, and he never became fully accredited, why is not known, possibly he may not have wished to have been bound down to certain places or appointments, and probably wishing to be free to speak when and where he liked. About 1835 he was appointed a Class Leader, his Sunday Class numbering 22, and his Friday Class 24; these being the largest classes in the Stourport Society.

William Haywood had the greatest reverence for the Lord's Day, and nothing grieved him more than to see that day desecrated, and he was not slow to rebuke those who remembered not to keep it holy. He was no respecter of persons, the rich and influential as well as those of his own class being rebuked alike. It was the custom at that time to run many of the mills and factories in the district on the Sunday. This he resolved, by the grace of God, to stop, and he could be seen every Sunday preaching in front of the works against this great sin. So persistent was he that more than once he was threatened with the law; but this did not deter him, rather causing him to increase his efforts in what he believed to be right. He was on one occasion brought before the magistrates of Kidderminster, who asked him for his preaching license. Holding up his Bible and repeating a passage of scripture, he told them that was his license. Once, when he was put in the cell, he sang his favourite hymns so heartily as to be speedily released.

At the annual Rock wake it was the custom to carry on the festivities upon the Lord's day; this was to him most grievous, and year after year he was to be found there, proclaiming against it, and warning the people of the punishment awaiting Sabbath breakers. Upon one of these occasions he

went down upon his knees and prayed that God would send something which would convince them of the error of their ways, and immediately a great hurricane arose which blew down tents, overthrew stands, and scattered what was for sale. The people were terrified, and from that day to this there has been no wake held on the Sabbath. A spectator on the occasion still lives to tell the story.

The owners of a flour mill, much annoyed by his persistency, threatened that if he ventured there again they would let loose a great savage mastiff upon him. Next Sunday he was there, and commenced by singing "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath." The dog was let go, workmen and onlookers expecting to see William bitten and torn, but the animal went to him as quiet as a lamb, lay at his feet, and licked his shoes. This was too much for the owners, who were convinced that there was something more than ordinary about the man. The mill was closed on Sundays never to be opened on that day again. Others followed the example, and most if not all the works closed on the Lord's Day. Mr. Haywood travelled many miles preaching the Word of Life; with Bible in one hand and hat in the other, he became a well-known figure to all. He was of a most benevolent disposition and never forgot when visiting the sick, to administer to their temporal as well as spiritual wants. So earnest and persistent was he in his endeavour to do good and in the reproof of sin that he was sometimes carried beyond the bounds of prudence, yet, in spite of this, it is said he was never openly insulted, but was always treated with the greatest respect. As old age came on he assumed a very venerable appearance; with long hair and beard snowy-white, he was known by everyone. He died Sept. 14th, 1868, in his 74th year, and is buried in Mitton Churchyard.

Ministers Born in the Circuit.

WILLIAM BIRD, who was born at Stourport, April 11th, 1781. Though not favoured with pious parents, he was in early life a subject of deep religious impressions and at the age of eighteen was brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, under the ministry of the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson. To the end of his life he referred to his conversion in terms of profound gratitude to God and of loving veneration for the saintly man by whose instrumentality it had been effected. At the Conference of 1806, he was appointed to the Hinckley Circuit, and for forty-five years he exercised a diligent, acceptable, and successful ministry. His sermons were masterly and forcible expositions of evangelical truth: prepared with the utmost care, they were replete with original and pungent passages which produced a deep impression upon those who listened to them. As a Superintendent, he blended watchfulness over the interests of his Circuits with tenderness and solicitude for the sorrowful and afflicted. As the Chairman of a District, he administered the rules of the Connexion in a time of great agitation and difficulty with striking ability and faithfulness. During the illness which terminated his life he possessed a calm and joyous confidence in the Atonement. A short time before his departure, he said, "Jesus, Jesus, gracious Saviour, MY Saviour, MY Jesus; come, Lord Jesus." He died Sept, 7th, 1869, in the 89th year of his age, and the 64th of his ministry.

JAMES MOLE, who was born at Bewdley, August 19th, 1782. He joined the Methodist Society when about fifteen years of age, and very soon after experienced the forgiveness of sins. Having been several years engaged as a Local Preacher, he entered the ministry in 1806; and from this time he laboured with much acceptance in the various Circuits to which he was appointed. He devoted much of his time and attention to the children of our people, regularly holding meetings with them, even in the small villages of his Circuits. His sermons were marked by the simplicity and earnestness with which he stated and applied evangelical truth, and were attended by the unction of the Holy Ghost. During his short but painful illness, his soul magnified the Lord. He died at Faversham, January 29th, 1849, aged 66 years.

SAMUEL TAYLOR, born at Kidderminster in 1810. He was a Methodist of the third generation. Converted in 1829, he soon began to preach. In 1834 he became a candidate, remaining in the full work of the ministry forty-three years, and rendering effective service. His preaching was logical and argumentative, rather than emotional; but it was distinctly evangelistic in tone. Many were added to the Church as the result of his powerful appeals; of whom some became ministers themselves, and others local preachers. He became a Supernumerary in 1877, but continued to render acceptable service up to a short time before his death. His end was sudden. He had attended the Covenant service, and greatly enjoyed it; the following Friday, January 8th, 1897, he calmly fell asleep, and without a struggle passed to his reward.

THOMAS PURSLOW, born at Stourport, and died at Sierra Leone, in the second year of his proba-

tionary ministry, aged thirty years. His piety was decided and consistent, and he lived eminently in the spirit of prayer. His affectionate disposition greatly endeared him to his brethren, and the people generally. His style of preaching was plain, earnest and often pathetic. He was remarkable for a regular and orderly attention to his several duties, and unremitting in his endeavours to promote the spiritual and intellectual improvement of the students in the Native Training Institution, in which he resided at the time of his death. He died October 2nd, 1848, after an illness of ten days, supported by the consolations of religion, and reposing with entire confidence upon the merits of the Redeemer.

JAMES LEES, who was born at Kidderminster, in 1812. He had godly parents, and grew up in the midst of religious influences. At the age of sixteen he was converted to God. He entered the Ministry in 1836. He proved himself to be a workman needing 'not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' He was an indefatigable student; his discourses were always enriched with sound Biblical truth, and marked by earnest appeals to the reason and conscience of his hearers. As a superintendent, he was a strict disciplinarian, laborious and faithful in the discharge of all the duties of his office. After thirty years of happy and successful toil, he was compelled in 1866, by failing health, to retire from the full work of the ministry. He settled at Leighton Buzzard, but continued to render what service he could. From a theological class, which he conducted for some years, several young men passed into the ministry. His end was sudden; but he was fully prepared. On August 6th, 1882, he had a stroke of paralysis, and after a few hours of almost entire unconsciousness he passed to his rest.

JOHN GREGORY MANTLE, who was born at Stourport, entered the ministry in 1877. Mr. Mantle is well-known throughout the connection as a most earnest and indefatigable labourer in the work of God. His work at Birmingham and Brighton has been the wonder and admiration of the Church. Possessed of great faith, he has attacked and surmounted difficulties of no ordinary nature, and many have been added unto the Church through his instrumentality. May he long be spared to engage in the work in which he so much delights.

GEORGE STEWARD—(*See Highley*).

Ministers Appointed to the Circuit.

- 1797—Richard Elliot. Samuel Taylor.
 1798—Joseph Taylor. John Knowles.
 1800—Francis Wrigley. James Buckley.
 1801—James Buckley. Jonas Jagger.
 1802—George Button. John Gisburn.
 1803—George Button. William Palmer.
 1804—Jonathan Edmondson. Thomas Laycock.
 1805—Jonathan Edmondson. James Blackett.
 1806-7—Charles Gloyne. Humphrey Parsons.
 1808—Jacob Stanley. James Hyde.
 1809—Jacob Stanley. Joshua Fearnside.

CIRCUIT DIVIDED.

- 1810—Thomas Hutton. Webster Morgan.
 1811—Thos. Hutton. Theophilus Lessey, Junr.
 1812—John Lancaster. Theophilus Lessey, Junr.
 1813—John Lancaster. William France. Samuel Sugden.
 1814—John Townsend. William France. John Smith, Junr.

- 1815—John Townsend. William Gillgrass. Joseph Thomas.
- 1816—Thomas Dowty. William Gillgrass. Joseph Thomas.
- 1817—Thomas Dowty. Richard Smetham.
- 1818—Richard Smetham. James Brooke.
- 1819—Jacob Stanley. James Brooke.
- 1820-21—Jacob Stanley. James Allen.
- 1822-23—Henry S. Hopwood. William Sleep.
- 1825—James Heaton. William Sleep. William Stones (Supernumerary).
- 1826-27—James Heaton. James Mortimer.
- 1828—John Bustard. James Mortimer. C. Kirkpatrick (Supernumerary).
- 1829-30—J. Bustard. Joseph Hunt. C. Kirkpatrick (Supernumerary).
- 1831—John Knowles, Senr. Joseph Hunt. C. Kirkpatrick (Supernumerary).
- 1832—John Knowles, Senr. Edward Summer.
- 1833-34—Josiah Goodwin. Edward Summer.
- 1835—Josiah Goodwin. William Bytheway.
- 1836-37—William Davies (2). William Bytheway.
- 1838-40—Richard Waddy. Henry Hickman.
- 1841-42—William Woolsey. Edward Usher.
- 1843-44—Simeon Noall. John Saunders.
- 1845—William Clough. John Saunders.
- 1846—William Clough. John Smart. T. Hulme.
- 1847-48—Joseph Hollies. John Smart. J. Stanley (Supernumerary).
- 1849-50—Henry Pavis. Edward Russell. J. Stanley (Supernumerary).
- 1851—Henry Pavis. Edward Russell.
- 1852—Benjamin John. Henry Ranson.
- 1853—Benjamin John. Thomas Green. J. B. Brownell (Supernumerary).
- 1854—Benjamin John. Thomas Green.
- 1855-56—Wm. James Shrewsbury. Joseph Officer.

- 1857—Wm. Jas. Shrewsbury. Thomas Crosby.
 1858-59—John Wilson (1). Thomas Crosby.
 1860-62—Joseph T. Sangar. William Allen (B).
 1863—James E. Moulton. John Harrop.
 1864—Joseph Little (A). John Harrop. J.
 Saunders (Supernumerary).
 1865-66—Joseph Little (A). John S. Vickers. J.
 Saunders (Supernumerary).
 1867—Ebenezer Moulton (A). Chas. J. Williams.
 1868—Ebenezer Moulton (A). Wesley Hurt. John
 Saunders, Geo. B. Macdonald (Sups).
 1869—Ebenezer Moulton (A). Wesley Hurt. J.
 Saunders (Supernumerary).
 1870—Edward Stokes. Wesley Hurt.
 1871—Edward Stokes. Joseph Bailey.
 1872-73—John Pinkney. Joseph Bailey.
 1874—William Rogers Williams. Joseph Caley.
 1875—George F. Driver. Joseph Caley. J. F.
 Reynolds (Supernumerary).
 1876—George F. Driver. Joseph Caley.
 1877-78—Charles Povah. J. Watkiss Jones. G. F.
 Driver (Supernumerary).
 1879—C. Povah. G. E. Polkinghorne. G. F.
 Driver (Supernumerary).
 1880-81—Edward Crump. G. E. Polkinghorne. G.
 F. Driver (Supernumerary).
 1882—Edward Crump. George Reid.
 1883-4-5—James Parkes. Robert Killip.

CIRCUIT DIVIDED.

- 1886-7—Samuel Brown (B).
 1888-9—Joseph Milligan.
 1890-1—Edward Parry.
 1892—Edward Parry.
 1893-4-5—James Hutchinson.
 1896-7-8—Frederick Law.
 1899—Henry Parkes.

NAMES OF CIRCUIT STEWARDS.

[Unknown prior to 1811, but most probably the office was held by the members of the Wright and Hill families].

1811-16—Thomas Wright.

1817-19—William Hill.

1820-24—Edward Russell.

1825-27—George Baldwin. Mark Oliver.

1828—Richard Carr. Mark Oliver.

1829—Edward Russell. Mark Oliver.

1830—Enoch Baldwin. Mark Oliver.

1831-37—Enoch Baldwin. J. Brown.

1837-43—Enoch Baldwin. Mark Oliver.

1843-48—Enoch Baldwin. J. Morgan.

1853-4—Henry E. Stanley. J. Morgan.

1855—Benjamin Owens. J. Morgan.

1856-7—Benjamin Owens. John Lamb.

1858-61—Oliver Giles. John Mantle.

1862-74—T. Owens. John Nicholls.

1875-78—John Nicholls. T. J. Baldwin.

1879-91—John Nicholls. Enoch Baldwin.

1892-4—John Mantle. Thomas Owens.

1895-99—Thomas Owens. John W. Powell.

TEXTS AND MOTTOES FROM OLD PLANS.

“We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”

"A sound faith is the best divinity; a good conscience the best law; and temperance the best physic." "Never venture on any action, unless you bring God to it; nor rest satisfied, unless you carry God from it."

"I fell into a mistake, when a young man, in thinking that I could talk to men of the world on their own ground; and could thus win them over to mine. I was fond of painting, and so I talked with them on that subject. This pleased them; but I did not consider that I gave a consequence to their pursuits which did not belong to them; whereas I ought to have endeavoured to raise them above these, that they might engage in higher."

"We should speak so as in the first place, to instruct and be understood; in the second, to please, at least so far as to attract and fix attention; in the third, to gain, and conquer."

"The Communion of Saints was ordained of God for the accomplishment of some of the highest privileges of the Gospel. Without it, the body of Christ may exist, but it cannot thrive. Meetings upon the Apostolical principle of assembling for mutual sympathy, exhortation, and prayer, are most important."

"Preachers are to feed the people, not with gay tulips, and useless daffodils; but with the bread of life, and medicinal plants; springing from the margin of the fountain of salvation."

"In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

"And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil."

“Serve the Lord with gladness. It is a glory to God when the world sees that a Christain hath that in him that can make him cheerful in the worst of times. He can, with the nightingale, sing with a thorne in his breast. Religion doth not break our viol, but it tunes and makes our music sweeter.”

“Three young men, private members of the Wesleyan Society, acted on the aggressive principle in extending religion; and in one year more than thirty persons were led to the sinner’s Friend, by their truly benevolent and energetic exertions.”

COPIED FROM AN OLD REGISTER OF DEATHS IN STOURPORT CIRCUIT.

“MARY ROLLINS was a member of our Society in Stourport about six months. She received a ticket on the 19th September, 1804, and was committed to the dust on the 26th. She said to her husband in her last moments, “I have been sincere since I made a profession of religion.” Our friends thought there was hope in her death.”

“BETSEY LOWE departed this life in the seventeenth year of her age. She had been a member of the Methodist Society about three years. Her convictions were deep, and her conversion sound. Her conduct was such as became the Gospel of Christ in health and strength; and during a long illness which preceded her death, she exercised herself in resignation and submission to the Divine will. To a friend who called upon her a little before her death, she said, “I have a strong confidence in God through Christ. I have no fear of death, because the sting is taken away; I have victory through the conquering Saviour.”

“JOHN HARDMAN resided in the parish of Caynam, Shropshire. He attended our chapel on the Clee Hills for a considerable time, and being convinced of sin and having a desire to flee from the wrath to come, he joined himself to the Society. He soon obtained the favour of God, through Christ, and for about two years adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things. Then his Lord called him, full of peace, to a better world.”

“ANN MORRIS was a member of our Society in Kidderminster about nine years. She was called hence very suddenly, September, 1804. There was good reason to hope she died in the faith.”

“JOHN SPRAGG was a member of Kidderminster Society about eight years. He died of a malignant fever, Nov. 1804. He was exceedingly happy in his last moments, having a clear prospect of, and a good title to, the Kingdom of Glory. Mr. Laycock preached his funeral sermon to a large congregation.”

“ANN CHILD was a member of our Society at Clee Town about three years. She was a woman of great affliction, but it was sanctified to the good of her soul, being a principal means of bringing her to a knowledge of herself, and a saving knowledge of God. She had an uncommon flow of animal spirits which might have led her to many things inconsistent with her profession, if the afflicting hand of God had not been upon her. Her soul was truly humble, patient, and resigned. She died happy, June 4th, 1805.”

“MARGARET BRADLEY, Brookhampton, died August 8th, 1805. She was a Methodist about four years. Her complaint was a consumption, which was occasioned by going to reside in a new house. She professed faith in the Redeemer, and departed in peace.”

“ELIZABETH CHALLONER died Oct. 5th, 1805, at Kidderminster. She had been a worthy member fifteen years. She was an upright, honest, pious woman. She loved God and His cause above all things. Her affliction was long and painful ; but God supported her, and blessed her with patience, meekness and love. Her last moments were glorious. She died full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”

“ANN PRICE died of a fever at Kidderminster, Dec. 2nd, 1805. There was hope in her death. She had been a member about two years”

“ANN SMITH was called hence by a fever, Dec. 18th, 1805. She was a member of the Society at Kidderminster. Her end was happy.”

“EDWARD MORRIS, Cold Green, died Dec. 29th, 1805. He had been in our Society twelve or thirteen years, from the commencement of Methodism there. He was a remarkably fine-tempered man. He had been married twenty-four years and, I was told, had never given his wife an angry word all the time. He left seven children and a widow to mourn his loss. His life had been holy, and his death was blessed.”

“JOHN ASTON died at Mamble on the 25th day of February, 1806. He endured a long and painful illness with Christian fortitude. He had been a member of our Society about four years. He had faith in Christ, and died happy.”

“SARAH PREECE died at Ludlow, May 18th, 1806. She had been a member of that Society from its formation. Her experience was not remarkably deep ; but there was great hope in her death.”

“SARAH LLOYD, a member of the Society at Bind, departed this life in the month of June, 1806. She was young in years, but had made considerable

advance in the Divine life. Her temper was remarkably sweet and her whole conduct such as became the Gospel of Christ."

John Edmondson, July 17th, 1806.

"WILLIAM TONKINS, died Aug. 23rd, 1806, aged 33 years, left a wife and two children. He had been a member of the Methodist Society about six years. He maintained a good moral character. His last afflictions were heavy, but he evinced great patience and resignation to the will of God, and died in peace."

"SAMUEL TAYLOR, Kidderminster, died Sept. 7th, 1806. He had been a member of the Methodist Society upwards of twenty years, in which he filled the office of Leader and also of Steward with great approbation and profit to many. His death was a great loss to his family and to the Church of Christ, but to 'eternal gain.'"

"SARAH DEWSBURY died in Stourport, May 26th, 1808. She had been a worthy member of the Methodist Society many years, and she departed enjoying the salvation of God."

"MARY SMITH, wife of Mr. Smith, Builder, in Stourport, died May 10th, 1808, aged 67. She had been many years a member of the Methodist Society, and was liberal in her support to the cause of God. Her last affliction was heavy, but she steadfastly professed confidence in the Lord."

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

The Worcester China Cup, from which Mr. Wesley drank his mull'd wine when he visited Stourport, is in the possession of Mrs. Robinson.

The late Mr. Powell, father of Mr. J.W. Powell, would never purchase a plan, so that he might not be tempted to stay away from the service, should the

preacher be a dry one ; consequently, he never knew, except on special occasions, who would preach, until he had entered the chapel.

An old Circuit Minister used to say that the Stourport Society was noted for its wealth, Kidderminster for its piety, and Bewdley for its intelligence.

Dunley Mission Room was opened in 1888, at a cost of £30, mainly through the efforts of Mrs. J. H. Jackson. The School there, of which she is Superintendent, numbers about seventy scholars.

The Stourport Chapel keepers during the past hundred years have been :—B. Dewsbury, Seymour, Edwards, Bishop, T. Bibb, and H. Jones, in succession.

The plans at the beginning of the century were printed by W. Harding, of Bewdley. From 1827-33, Nicholson, Stourport ; 1836-43, G. Green, Stourport ; 1844-61, S. S. Green, Stourport ; 1861-63, Paton and Son, Kidderminster ; 1864-70, J. Haywood, Stourport ; 1880, W. Eaton ; 1899, Haywood & Son, Stourport

The first Organist was Mr. Pearce Baldwin, followed by T. J. Baldwin, Stanley Baldwin, Emily Yates Baldwin, E. J. Baldwin, Mary Court, Mary Mantle, Isaac L. Wedley.

The District Meeting has twice been held at Stourport, in 1812 and 1821, for which purpose the Chapel was well cleaned.

The Rev. Robert Newton Young preached the annual Chapel sermons for many years in succession.

The members of the Baldwin family have been pew holders for more than a century ; also Miss Tyler's family for a like period ; and Mr. Powell's family for nearly ninety years.

For at least one hundred and eight years the Owens family has been connected with the Society at Bewdley. The oldest member at Bewdley at the present time is Mrs. Styles, wife of Ald. G. Styles.

LOCAL PREACHERS AND PREACHING PLACES

1797.

PLACES:—Stourport Kidderminster. Bewdley, Astley Common, Forest, Bind, Clee Hil'. Factory. The Chapel. Ludlow, Beveney Wood, Blackford, Coxed Ford. Clee Town, Brookerton, Ditton. Payton's Aston, Bridgnorth. Woolstons, Clowstop.

1807.

PLACES:—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Areley Common, Forest, Mamble and Clowstop, Mamble and Frith Common, Beveney and Cleobury, Clee Hill and Factory, Bind, Belbroughton, Cockshot Ford and Stoke, Cold Green, Ditton, Brookhampton, Aston, Bridgnorth, Arley, Ludlow, Shelsley, Tenbury.

PREACHERS:—Bennett, Jones, Hall, Newhall, Walsh, Hill, Clinton, Davis, Lawley, Jehu, Sheel, Gowen, Wright, Raine, Aston, Lowe, Corfield, Thomas, Hammond, Gething, Morris, Harper, Rowe.

1810.

PLACES:—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Bridgnorth, Bind, Beveney Wood. Forest, Cleobury, Frith Common, Belbroughton, Shelsley. Upper Arley, Areley Common, Mamble, Clowstop.

1820.

PLACES:—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, High'ey, Acton Cookley, Frith Common, Button Bridge, Forest. Beveney Wood, Pensax, Cleobury.

LOCAL PREACHERS:—Bennett, Jones, Davis, Sheel, Gowen, Raine, Aston, Highway, Rushbury, Lister, Charlwood, Cox, Hammond, Hyatt, Hartle, Bolton, Perry, Walford, Morton, Fitter, Crowther. On trial, C.

1830.

PLACES.—Stourport, Kidderminster, Lion Field, Bewdley, Forest, Frith Common Cleobury, High Green, Beveney Wood, Highley, Button Bridge Pound Green and Upper Arley, Wolverley, Cookley, Broom Hill. Belbroughton, Acton, Areley Common, and Burf, Elms.

PREACHERS:—Jones, Clinton, Davis, Perry, Sheel, Gowen, Raine, Aston, Highway, Rushbury, Lister, Charlwood, Cox, Hyatt, Bolton, Walford, Morton, Fitter, Crowther, Green, Lamb, Carter, Brown, Cooke, Kay, M. Chambers, R. Chambers, Bunting, Cox, Stockall. On trial:—J. Nicholls, H. Watkins.

1840.

PLACES:—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Forest, Frith Common, Highley, Beveney Wood and Cleobury, Button Bridge, Pound Green, Cookley, Trimpley and Upper Arley, Broom Hill, Elms, Kingswood, Burf, Hill Pool.

PREACHERS :—Davis, Sheel, Gowen, Raine, Aston, Rushbury, Lister, Brookes, Charlwood, Hyatt, Green, Young, Brown, Cooke, Kay, Bunting, Watkins, Owens, Lamb, Hopwood, Jones, Mole, Morgan, Burford, Stormont, Butler, Southwell. On trial :—S. L., K., B. R., W. L.

1850.

PLACES :—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Cookley, Frith Common, Overwood and Cleobury, Highley, Pound Green and Upper Arley, Elms and Kingswood, Hoo Brook and Wilden, Hartlebury Common and Mitre Oak, Cutnall Green, Lark Hill Kidderminster, Franche.

PREACHERS :—Raine, Stourport; Rushbury, Overwood; Lister, Bewdley; Brooks, Bewdley; Charlwood, Kidderminster; Young, Bewdley; Watkins, Stourport; Owens, Bewdley; Burford, Kidderminster; Jones, Stourport; Morgan, Senr., Franche; Morgan, Junr., Broadwaters; Price, Kidderminster; Bradshaw, Kidderminster; Mantle, Stourport; Moule, Clowstop; Hyde, Kidderminster; Whittingham, Bewdley; Morgan, Kidderminster; Bayliss, Kidderminster; Aston, Frith Common; J. Morgan, Kidderminster; Parrot, Stourport; Cox, Cookley; Tattersall, Kidderminster; Reynolds, Kidderminster. On Trial, Jones, Retchford, Churchitt.

1860.

PLACES :—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Cookley, Abberley, Frith Common, Highley, Pound Green, Forest, Franche, Wilden, Love Lane, Kidderminster, Dunley.

PREACHERS :—Lister, Charlwood, Young, Watkins, Owens, T. Morgan, Rice, Mantle, Hyde, Aston, Parrot, Jackson, Smith, Bradshaw, Homfray, Lea, Cooper, Aston, Bottrill.

1870.

PLACES :—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Cookley, Frith Common, Abberley, Eardiston, Highley, Billingsley, Forest.

PREACHERS :—Watkins, Owens, Burford, Rice, Mantle, Hyde, Aston, Parrot, Bradshaw, Smith, Homfray, Lea, Cooper, Parrot, Turner, Huggins, Dyer, Garlick, Broom, Rew, Prunell, Long, Radnor, Harley.

1880.

PLACES :—Stourport, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Cookley, Frith Common, Abberley, Highley, Forest.

PREACHERS :—Watkins, Burford, Rice, Mantle, Bradshaw, Parrot, Cooper, Lloyd, Turner, Mayers, Prunell, Micklewright, Cotching. READERS :—Pretty, Randle.

1890.

PLACES :—Stourport, Bewdley, Highley, Dunley.

PREACHERS :—Hicks, Mantle, Parrott, Turner, Jones, Randle, Pretty, Micklewright, Wedley, Parry. On Trial, Berry, H.J., F.J., A.P.

1899.

PLACES :—Stourport, Bewdley, Highley, Dunley, Abberley.

PREACHERS :—Pretty, Wedley, Boden, Margerison, Rampley, Lee, Glover. On Trial, Sutton.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

Rev. Richard Elliot (1797) First Minister appointed to
Stourport Circuit
Rev. Henry Parkes (1899), Present Minister.
The Pulpit, Stourport Wesleyan Church
The Manse, Stourport
Stourport Sunday School
Wesleyan Church, Bewdley

